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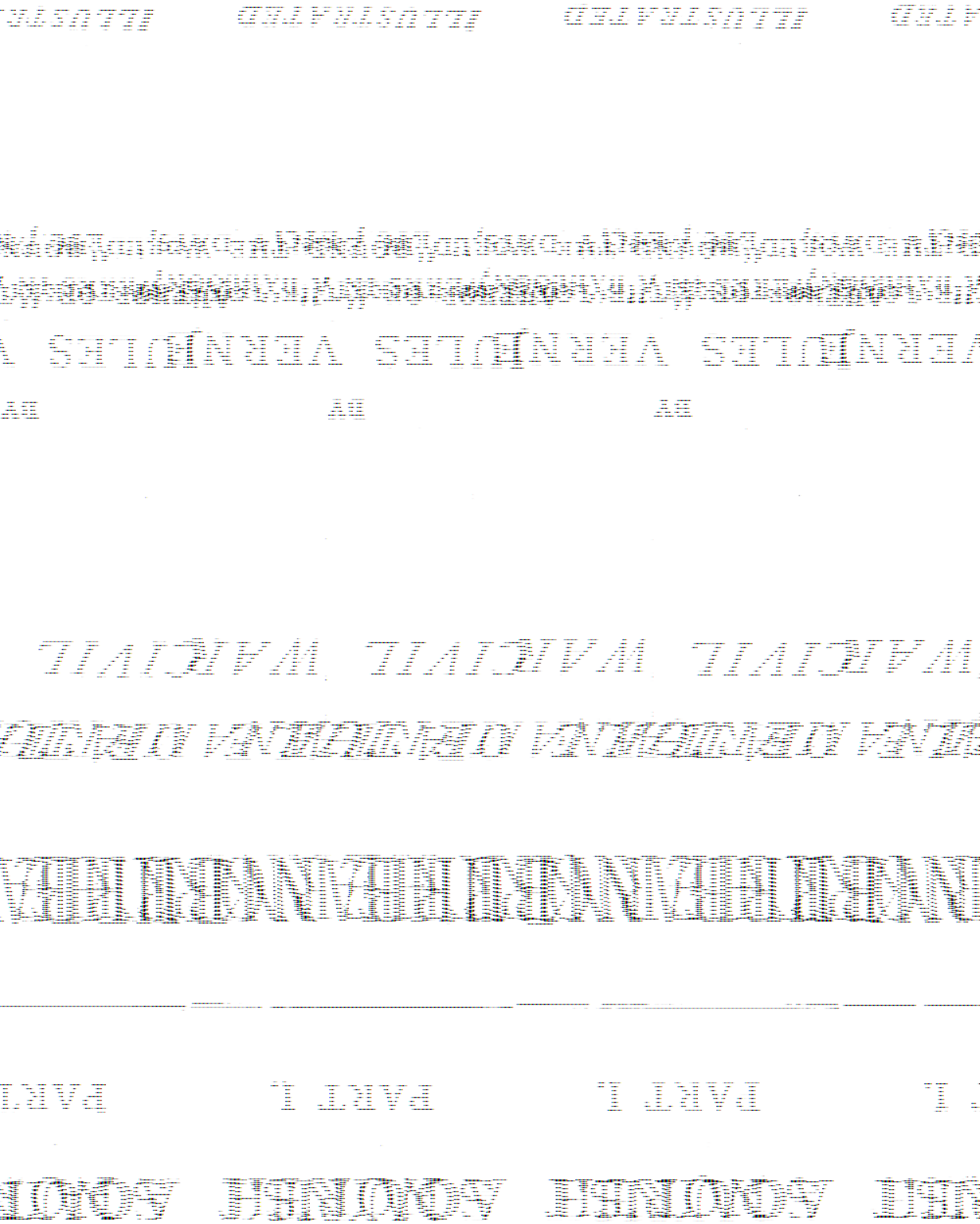

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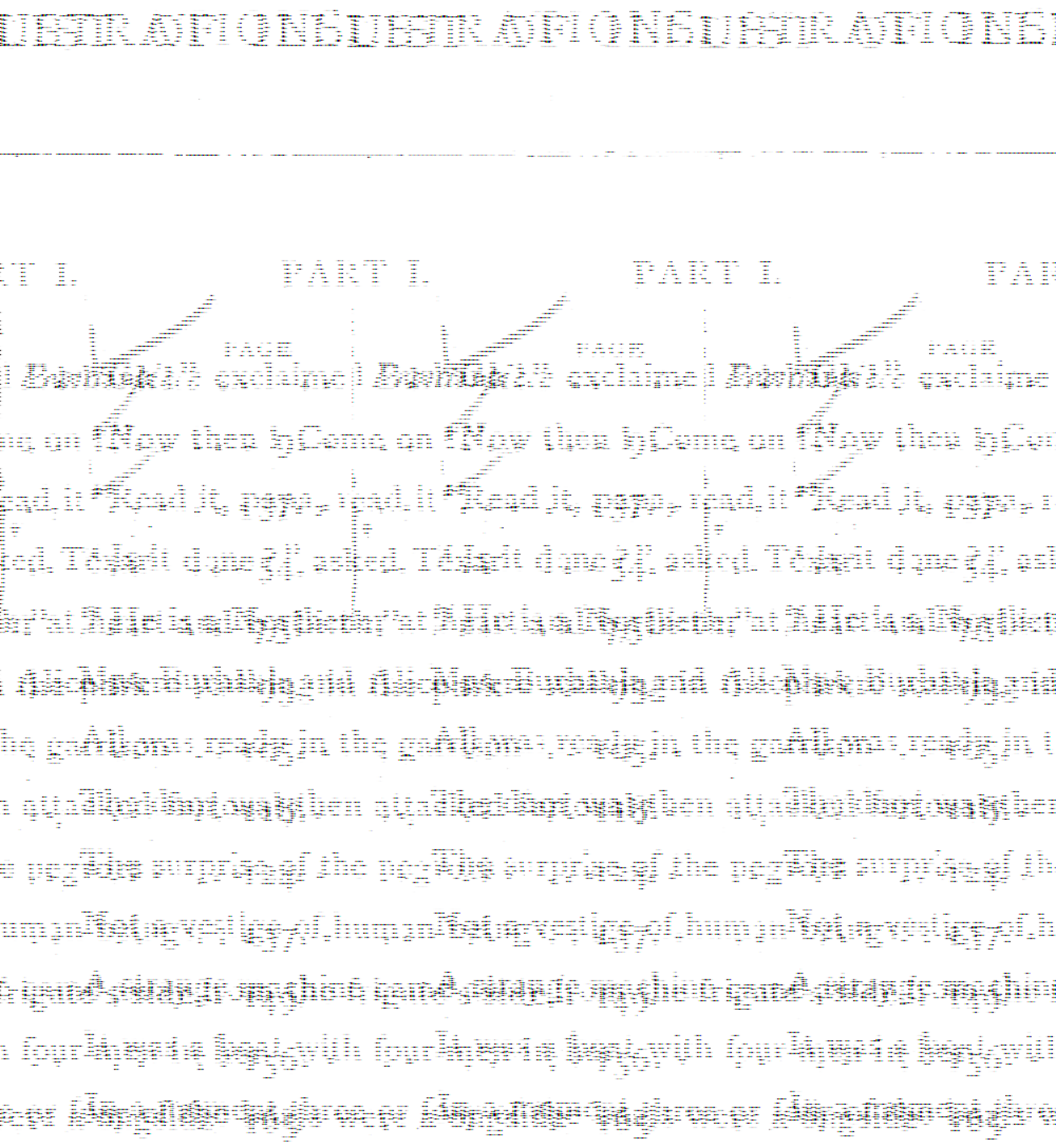

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NORTH AND SOUTH.

Part I.

BURBANK THE NORTHERNER.

CHAPTER I.

ON BOARD THE "SHANNON."

FLORIDA was annexed to the American federation in 1819; it was organized into a state a few years afterwards. By the annexation the area of the republic was increased by some 67,000 square miles. But the star of Florida shines with second-rate brilliancy in that constellation of thirty-eight which spangle the banner of the United States of America.

Florida, throughout, is a low, narrow tongue of land, and its rivers, with one exception—the St. John's—owing to the narrowness of the country, are of no importance. From such a slight rise, there is not sufficient fall for the watercourses to be of any rapidity; there are no mountains, only a few lines of "bluffs" or low hills such as are numerous in the central and southern regions of the Union. In form the peninsula is not unlike the tail of a beaver dipping into the ocean between the Atlantic on the east and the Gulf of Mexico on the west.

Florida's nearest neighbour to the north is Georgia, the frontier running a little above the isthmus which joins the peninsula to the continent.

Florida seems to be a country apart, with its people half Spaniards, half Americans, and its Seminole Indians so

different to their congeners in the west. In the south it is arid, sandy, almost entirely bordered by sand-hills formed by successive irruptions of the Atlantic; but in the north its plains are of marvellous fertility. Its name is justified, to the letter. The flora is superb, vigorous, and of exuberant variety, more especially in that portion watered by the St. John's. This river is a broad stream flowing from south to north, over a course of some two hundred and fifty miles, of which one hundred and seventeen, up to Lake George, are navigable. The rivers flowing east and west have no room for length; but the St. John's, from its central course to the north, suffers from no such hindrance, and numerous branches run into it or rather into the multitudinous creeks along its banks. The St. John's is in fact the chief artery of the country, which receives its life from its waters, for water is the blood of the earth.

It was the 7th of February, 1862. The steamboat *Shannon* was running down the St. John's. At four o'clock in the afternoon she was due at Picolata, after calling at the piers higher up the river, and the forts in St. John's and Putnam counties. A few miles beyond she would enter Duval county, which is bordered by Nassau county and cut off from it by the river bearing that name.

Picolata itself is not of much importance, but its neighbourhood is rich in indigo plantations, sugar plantations, rice fields, cotton fields, and vast cypress groves. For some distance round the population is numerous, and it is an important centre for trade and travellers. It is the landing-place for St. Augustine, one of the chief towns of eastern Florida, situated some dozen miles away on that part of the sea-coast sheltered by the long island of Anastasia. An almost straight road leads from the river port to the town.

On the pier at Picolata there are to-day many more travellers than usual. Some speedy vehicles known as stages, each seating eight persons, drawn by four or six mules galloping like mad along the road across the marsh, had brought them from St. Augustine. It was important for them not to miss the steamboat; to do so would be to

risk a delay of at least forty-eight hours in getting back to the towns and villages down the river. For the *Shannon* made only one passage up or down each day, and she was the only means of transport. It was therefore necessary to be at Picolata when she called; and the vehicles had unloaded their passengers an hour before she was due.

There were about fifty men on the gangway at Picolata. While they waited they were talking excitedly. They had divided into two groups not at all anxious to mix with each other. What had brought them from St. Augustine? Was it some serious matter, some political contest? It was obvious that there was no chance of their agreeing. Enemies they had come, and enemies they would return. That could be seen clearly enough from the angry looks they exchanged, from the marked division between the groups, from several ill-sounding words whose defiant meaning no one could mistake.

A prolonged whistling began to be heard above stream.

The *Shannon* soon appeared at the bend of the right bank half a mile above Picolata. Thick clouds of smoke escaped from her two funnels, and crowned the large trees which the sea breeze was shaking on the opposite bank. The moving mass grew larger rapidly. The tide had just turned; and the current, which for three or four hours had been against her, was now in her favour and taking the waters of the St. John's towards the sea.

At length the bell was heard. The wheels going astern stopped the *Shannon*, and her hawsers brought her alongside the pier.

The passengers went on board somewhat hastily. One of the groups went first; the other did not move. It looked as though they were waiting for one or several travellers who ran a chance of being late. Two or three men went up the pier to the place where the road from St. Augustine came in; and then they looked towards the east, evidently with impatience.

And not without reason; for the captain of the *Shannon*, who was on the bridge, shouted to them,—

"Now then! come on!"

"In a minute or two," answered one of the men in the group that remained on the gangway.

"I can't wait, gentlemen."

"A few minutes!"

"No! not one!"

"Only a moment!"

"Impossible! The tide is running out, and I may have no water over the bar at Jacksonville."

"And besides," said one of those on board, "there is no reason why we should put up with their fancies."

"That is what I think, Mr. Burbank," said the captain. "Duty first. Now then, gentlemen, come on board; I am off."

And the sailors began to push away the steamboat from the pier, while sonorous jets escaped from the steam-whistle. A shout stopped the manœuvre.

"There is Texar! There is Texar!"

A carriage came rattling along at full speed and dashed round the turning up to the pier. The four mules, which formed the team, stopped at the gate. A man got down. Those of his companions who had gone up the road rejoined him at a run. Then all of them went on board the boat.

"A moment more, Texar, and you could not have gone. That would have been awkward for you," said one of the group.

"Yes! It would have been two days before you got back to—where?—We shall know when you choose to tell us!" added another.

"And if the captain had listened to that rascal Burbank," said a third, "the *Shannon* would have been a quarter of a mile down stream by now."

Texar had just stepped on to the fore deck-house, accompanied by his friends. He contented himself with a look at James Burbank from where he was only separated from him by the bridge. Although he said not a word, the look he gave was sufficient to show the implacable hatred that existed between the two men. Burbank looked Texar straight in the face, turned his back on him, and went

to sit on the after deck-house, where his friends had already seated themselves.

"Burbank is not happy!" said one of Texar's companions. "And no wonder! He lost by his lies, and the recorder did justice to his false witness—"

"But not to himself," interrupted Texar, "and that justice I will undertake."

The *Shannon* had slacked off the hawsers. Her bow pushed off by the long poles, took the line of the current, and driven by her powerful wheels, helped by the ebbing tide, she glided rapidly between the banks of the St. John's.

American river steamboats are well known. They are many-storied houses crowned with wide terraces, and dominated by the two funnels and the flagstaffs which support the ironwork of the awnings. On the Hudson as on the Mississippi, these steamboats are floating palaces, and can hold the population of a small town. But there was no need for such grandeur on the St. John's. The *Shannon* was only a floating hotel, although in its interior and exterior arrangements it was similar to the *Kentucky* and the *Dean Richmond*.

The weather was magnificent. The very blue sky was spotted with light freckles of vapour that thinned off towards the horizon. In the thirtieth parallel of latitude the month of February is almost as warm in the New World as it is in the old on the confines of the Sahara; but a gentle breeze blown in from the sea tempers its excess.

Most of the passengers on the *Shannon* stopped on the deck-house to breathe the fresh air that the wind brought them from riverside forests. The slanting rays of the sun could not reach them beneath the awnings which were shaken like punkahs by the speed of the steamboat.

Texar and the five or six companions who had embarked with him, had thought well to go below to one of the boxes in the dining-room. There, with throats seasoned to the strongest drinks of American bars, they tossed off whole glasses of gin and Bourbon whiskey. They were indeed a rough lot, rude in habit and speech, wearing more leather

than cloth, and more accustomed to live in the woods than in cities. Texar appeared to have some right of superiority over them, due, doubtless, to the energy of his character as well as to his position and means. When Texar did not talk, his comrades remained silent and spent the time in drinking.

Texar, after carelessly running his eye over one of the newspapers which littered the dining-room tables, had just thrown it aside, saying,—

"That is all old news."

"I believe you," said one of his companions, "the paper is three days old."

"And a good many things happen in three days," added another.

"What is the latest about the war?" asked Texar.

"As far as we are concerned, the latest is that the Federals are preparing an expedition against Florida, and that means we may expect an invasion of northerners!"

"Is that true?"

"I don't know, but I heard of it at Savannah, and I heard of it again at St. Augustine."

"Well, let these Federals come!" exclaimed Texar, striking his fist on the table so as to make the glasses and bottles shake. "Yes! let them come! and we shall see if the Florida slave-owners will allow themselves to be robbed by the abolitionist thieves."

Texar's reply will have told two things to those readers who are unacquainted with what was then happening in America. First, that the war of Secession, declared really by the gun fired on Fort Sumter on the 11th April, 1861, was then in its most critical phase, for it had extended almost to the farthest limits of the Southern States; and secondly, that Texar, a supporter of slavery, made common cause with the immense majority of the people in the slave states. On board the *Shannon* were representatives of both parties. One—to use the different appellations bestowed on them during the long struggle—consisting of northerners, anti-slavery men, abolitionists or federals; the other of southerners, slavery men, secessionists or confederates.

An hour afterwards Texar and his comrades, having had quite enough to drink, appeared on the upper deck of the *Shannon*. She had already passed Trent Creek and Six Mile Creek on the right bank, Trent Creek coming in from a vast cypress grove, Six Mile Creek bringing its waters down from the Twelve Mile Marsh, of which the name tells the extent. The steamboat's course lay between borders of magnificent trees, tulip-trees, magnolias, pines, cypresses, yuccas, and many others, whose trunks were hidden by the wild undergrowth of azaleas and serpentarias. Occasionally, at the mouths of the creeks leading up to the marshy plains of St. John and Duval counties, a strong odour of musk impregnated the atmosphere, coming not from the shrubs, whose emanations are so penetrating in this climate, but from the alligators hurrying under the bushes at the noisy passage of the *Shannon*. Then there were birds of all sorts, woodpeckers, herons, jacamars, bitterns, white-headed pigeons, mocking-birds, and a hundred others differing in form and plumage, while the cat-bird reproduced all the sounds of the forest with his ventriloquial voice.

As Texar mounted the last of the steps on to the upper deck, a woman met him on her way down to the interior of the saloon. When she found herself face to face with him, she stepped back. She was a half-breed in the service of the Burbank family; her first movement had been one of unconquerable repulsion at finding herself suddenly face to face with the declared enemy of her master.

Texar gave her an evil look as she stepped back, and then shrugging his shoulders, he joined his companions.

"Yes, it is Zermah," he said, "one of the slaves of Mr. James Burbank, who says he does not approve of slavery."

Zermah made no reply. When the way to the saloon was clear, she went down it without turning to take any notice of the observation.

Texar strolled towards the bow of the steamboat; there,

after lighting a cigar, he apparently dismissed from his notice the friends who had followed him, and began to watch with some attention the left bank of the St. John's along the border of Putnam county.

Meanwhile, on the after-deck of the *Shannon*, the conversation had run on the war. When Zermah went, Burbank had remained with two of his friends, who had accompanied him to St. Augustine. One was his brother-in-law, Edward Carrol, the other was Mr. Walter Stannard, a Floridan living at Jacksonville. They were talking with considerable animation of the sanguinary strife of which the issue was a question of life or death to the United States. But, as we shall see, Burbank's opinion of the issue differed considerably from Texar's.

"I am anxious," said he, "to get back to Camdless Bay. We have been two days away. Perhaps some news of the war has arrived. Perhaps Dupont and Sherman are now masters of Port Royal and the islands of South Carolina."

"Anyhow, it will not be long before they are," said Carrol, "and I shall be much astonished if President Lincoln does not carry the war into Florida."

"And it will not be before it is time!" said Burbank. "It is quite time that the will of the Union should be imposed on these southerners of Georgia and Florida, who fancy they are too far off to be reached! See to what a degree of insolence vagabonds like Texar are led! He feels that he is supported by the slaveholders, and excites them against us northerners, whose position, which gets more and more difficult every day, lays us open to the back-wash of the war."

"You are right, James," said Edward Carrol. "It is of consequence that Florida should return as soon as possible to the authority of the Washington Government. If the Federal army does not come quickly we shall have to abandon our plantations."

"It may be only a question of days, Burbank," said Stannard. "When I left Jacksonville the day before yesterday, people were getting uneasy at the news of

Commodore Dupont's supposed plans for opening up the St. John's, and that would give a pretext for threatening those who do not think with the slave-owners. I am afraid that a rising would turn out the authorities of the town in favour of fellows of the worst description."

"I should not be surprised if it did," said Burbank. "We shall have a bad time of it till the Federal army comes; but it cannot be helped."

"What can we do?" asked Walter Stannard. "Supposing there exist at Jacksonville and other places a few brave colonists who think as we do on this slave question; they are not strong enough to withstand the Secessionists. We can only reckon for safety on the arrival of the Federals, and wish that when intervention is decided on it will take place without delay."

"Yes. Would they were here," exclaimed Burbank, "to deliver us from these blackguards!"

And we shall soon see that these Northerners, who, on account of family or other interests, were obliged to live amid a slave-holding population and conform to the usages of the country, were fully justified in their fears and the language they held concerning them.

The news discussed by Burbank and his friends was true. The Federal Government was preparing an expedition for the subjugation of Florida; not so much, however, for the military occupation of the State as the closing of the outlets against the blockade-runners, who took away local productions and brought in arms and munitions of war. It was in consequence of this blockade that the *Shannon* no longer plied up the southern coast of Georgia, which was then in the power of the Northern generals. For prudential reasons she stopped a little beyond the mouth of the St. John's, towards the north of Amelia Island, at the port of Fernandina, the terminus of the Cedar Keys railway, which crosses the Florida peninsula obliquely to the Gulf of Mexico. Higher than Amelia Island and the river St. Mary the *Shannon* would have risked capture from the Federal cruisers which were constantly on the coast.

It follows that the passengers were chiefly Floridans, whose business did not require their crossing the frontier. All of them were dwellers in the towns or villages on the St. John's and its affluents, and for the most part lived at St. Augustine or Jacksonville. At the different places they landed, and embarked either by the gangways from the wharves, or by piers built out in the English fashion.

One of the passengers intended, however, to quit the steamer in mid-stream. His plan was to leave her at a part of the river where there was no wharf or pier, nor village, nor isolated house, nor even a hunting or fishing hut in sight.

The passenger was Texar.

About six o'clock the *Shannon* gave three sharp screams from her steam whistle. Her wheels were almost immediately stopped, and she began to drift along with the stream, which hereabouts runs slowly. She was then off the entrance to Black Creek.

This creek is a deep gash in the left bank, into which flows a small river of the same name, which runs by the foot of Fort Heilman, almost on the boundary between Putnam and Duval counties. Its narrow opening is entirely hidden beneath an arch of boughs and foliage matted together, as close as the woof of some close tissue. This gloomy lagoon was almost unknown to the people of the country. No one knew that Texar had there his dwelling. The opening of the creek seemed in no way to break into the line of bank, and as night was falling rapidly, it would require a very skilful boatman to take a boat into such a place.

At the first whistle of the *Shannon*, a shout had come in answer—three times. A light burning among the trees on the bank was put in motion, showing that a canoe was coming out to meet the steamer.

It was only a skiff—a little bark boat, driven by one paddle. Soon the skiff was half a cable-length from the *Shannon*

ahoy.

Texar stepped up to the front of the fore-deck and making a speaking-trumpet with his hands, shouted,—

"Ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" came back in answer.

"Is that you, Squambo?"

"Yes, master!"

"Come alongside."

The skiff came alongside. By the light of the lantern attached to its bow, the man could be seen who was paddling it. He was an Indian, black-headed, naked to the waist, and sturdily built, to judge from the torso revealed in the fitful light.

Texar returned towards his companions and shook hands with them, bidding them a significant *au revoir*. Then giving a threatening look towards Mr. Burbank, he descended the ladder from the sponson, and stepped into the skiff. In a few turns of the paddle-wheels the steamer was out of sight, and no one on board could suspect that the little craft was about to vanish under the dark thickets on the bank.

"One scoundrel the less on board," said Carrol, without caring if he were heard by Texar's companions.

"Yes," said James Burbank, "and at the same time, a dangerous scoundrel. I have no doubt of it myself, although he has always been able to escape conviction."

"Anyway," said Stannard, "if a crime is committed to-night in the neighbourhood of Jacksonville, they cannot accuse him, for he has left the *Shannon*."

"I don't know that," said Burbank, "if they told me he had been stealing or assassinating this very moment fifty miles off in the north of Florida, I should not be surprised. And if he managed to prove that he was not the author of the crime, I should not be surprised after what has happened. But it is not worth while to worry ourselves about such a man. You are going back to Jacksonville, Stannard?"

"To-night."

"Is your daughter expecting you?"

"Yes, I am going to meet her."

"I understand," said Burbank; "and when are you coming to Camdless Bay?"

"In a day or so."

"Then come as soon as you can, my dear fellow. We are on the eve of very important events, and matters will get worse as the Federal troops come nearer. And I fancy your daughter Alice and you would be in greater safety at Castle House than in the town, where the Southerners are capable of any excess."

"Am I not a Southerner, Burbank?"

"Certainly, but you think and act as if you belonged to the North."

An hour afterwards the *Shannon*, carried along by the ebb which became stronger and stronger, passed the little village of Mandarin, placed on its green hill. Then five or six miles farther she stopped on the right bank of the river. A quay had been built there for ships to load and discharge at. A little above was an elegant pier, with a light wooden bridge suspended from two chains. This was the landing-place for Camdless Bay.

At the end of the pier were two blacks with lanterns, for the night was now very dark.

Burbank took leave of Stannard, and followed by Edward Carrol stepped off on to the pier.

Behind him went the half-breed Zermah, who answered from a distance to a child's voice.

"I am here, Dy! I am here!"

"And father?"

"Father is here too!"

The lights receded, and the *Shannon* continued her voyage, crossing obliquely to the left bank.

Three miles beyond Camdless Bay, on the other side of the river, she stopped at the pier of Jacksonville to put ashore most of her passengers.

There Walter Stannard went off with three or four of the men whom Texar had left an hour and a half before. Only half a dozen passengers were left on board, some for Pablo, a little town near the lighthouse at the mouth of the St.

John's, others for Talbot Island, off the coast at the opening of the channels of the same name, and others for the port of Fernandina.

The *Shannon* continued to beat the waters of the river, and cleared the bar without accident. An hour afterwards she disappeared at the turn of Trout Creek, where the St. John's mingles its already rough waters with the waves of the ocean.

CHAPTER II.

CAMDLESS BAY.

CAMDLESS BAY was the name of the plantation that belonged to James Burbank. There he lived with his family. The name of Camdless comes from one of the creeks of the St. John's, which runs in a little above Jacksonville, and on the opposite side of the river. Communication with the city was thus easy. A good boat, a north or south wind, and the ebb for going and the flood for returning, and in an hour the three miles could be sailed between Camdless Bay and the chief town of Duval county.

Burbank owned one of the finest properties in the country. He was rich himself, and his family was rich, and in addition to the Florida estate he held important landed property in the state of New Jersey, which adjoins the state of New York.

The site on the right bank of the St. John's had been very happily chosen for the foundation of a wealthy establishment. To its natural conveniences man had little to add. The land itself was adapted for all the requirements of extensive works, and the plantation of Camdless Bay, managed by an intelligent man, active and in the prime of life, well helped by his staff, and with no want of capital, was in a most flourishing state.

The plantation was twelve miles round, and had an area of four thousand acres. There were larger plantations in the Southern States, but there were none better managed. Dwelling-house, outbuildings, stables, cattle-sheds, huts for the slaves, farm-buildings, stores for the products of the soil, yards for handling them, workshops and mills, rail-

ways converging to the landing-place and carriage roads,—everything was marvellously arranged from a practical point of view; that it was a Northerner who had conceived, organized, and executed these works could be seen at the first glance. It was only plantations of the first class in Virginia or the Carolinas that could rival Camdless Bay. Besides, the ground consisted of "high hummocks," adapted for the culture of cereals, "low hummocks," specially fitted for coffee-shrubs and cocoa-trees, and marshes, or salt savannahs, where rice and sugar-cane fields could flourish.

It is well known that the cotton of Georgia and Florida is the most appreciated in the different markets of Europe and America, owing to the length and quality of its fibres, and the cotton-fields, with their plants in long, regularly-spaced lines, their leaves of tender green and their yellow flowers, were among the chief sources of revenue. At harvest-time these fields, for an acre or an acre and a half, would be covered with huts in which lived the slaves, women and children, whose duty it was to collect the capsules and take out the tufts—a very delicate operation, for the fibres must not be disturbed. The cotton, dried in the sun, was cleaned in a mill by means of toothed wheels and rollers, squeezed in a hydraulic press, done up in bales, hooped with iron, and so packed for exportation; and sailing-ships or steamers could load alongside the wharf at Camdless Bay.

James Burbank also devoted much attention to large fields of coffee-shrubs and sugar-canes. Here were plantations of from a thousand to twelve hundred trees, from fifteen to twenty feet high, resembling Spanish jasmine in their flowers, and with fruits as big as a cherry containing the two grains, which it was only necessary to extract and dry. There were large fields, we might say marshes, bristling with thousands of those long reeds, nine to eighteen feet high, with their crests shaking like the plumes of a troop of cavalry on the march. This crop, which was the subject of special care at Camdless Bay, yielded the sugar in the form of a liquor, which the refinery

transformed into refined sugar, and then, as derived products the syrups used in the manufacture of tafia and rum, and cane wine, a mixture of saccharine liquor with pineapple and orange juice. Although the crop was less important than that from the cotton, the cultivation was there a very profitable one. A few enclosures of cocoa-trees, fields of maize, yams, potatoes, tobacco, and two or three hundred acres under rice, brought in a large amount of additional profit.

But James Burbank had another enterprise on hand which produced at least equal profit to that of the cotton industry. This was the clearing of the forest which covered much of the estate. To say nothing of the products of the cinnamons, pears, oranges, citrons, olives, figs, mangoes, and bread fruits, or of all the fruit trees of Europe acclimatized so splendidly in Florida, the forests were regularly and constantly thinned. And great was the value of the logwoods, gazumas or Mexican elms, now used for so many purposes, baobabs, coral woods, with twigs and flowers as red as blood, buckeyes, a kind of yellow-flowered chestnut, black walnuts, oaks, southern pines, which yield such admirable specimens for the carpenter and shipwright, pachiriers whose seeds the sun at noon explodes like so many petards, parasol pines, tulip-trees, firs, cedars, and above all cypresses, the most widely extended tree in the peninsula, with its forests from sixty to a hundred miles in length. James Burbank had erected several sawmills in different parts of the plantation. Dams had been placed in several of the tributaries of the St. John's, and the peaceful streams broken into falls, which gave the mechanical power required to produce the beams, joists and planks of which the ships each year took entire cargoes.

There was, besides, a considerable stretch of prairie, on which flourished the horses, mules, and cattle in numbers enough to supply every agricultural want.

There are birds of all species in the woods or on the fields or plains of every part of Florida, and it can be imagined how they swarmed at Camdless Bay. Above

the trees soared the white-headed eagles with great spread of wing, whose shrill call resembles the fanfare of a cracked trumpet, vultures of extraordinary ferocity, giant bitterns, with a pointed beak like a bayonet. On the banks of the river among the reeds and beneath the interlacement of gigantic bamboos were flamingoes, pink or scarlet, white ibises looking as if they had been stolen from some Egyptian monolith, pelicans of colossal stature, myriads of terns, sea-swallows of all kinds, crab-catchers with tuft and green pelisse, purple-plumaged curlews, with brown down spotted with white, jacamars, kingfishers with golden reflections, a whole world of divers, waterhens, widgeons of the whistling species, quails, plovers, to say nothing of the petrels, puffins, scissorbeaks, seacrows, gulls, and tropic-birds which the wind would bring into the St. John's, and occasionally even flying-fish, beloved of epicures. On the prairies swarmed snipe, woodcock, curlews, marbled godwits, sultan-fowls with plumage of red, blue, green, yellow and white, like a flying palette, partridges, and white-headed, red-winged pigeons; among the eatable quadrupeds, grey squirrels, long-tailed rabbits, half-way between the hare and rabbit of Europe, and herds of deer, and besides these, racoons, turtle, ichneumons, and unfortunately a good many serpents of venomous species. Such was the representation of the animal kingdom at Camdless Bay, without reckoning the negroes, male and female, employed on the plantation. And if these were human beings, what excuse was there for the monstrous custom of slavery, by which they were bought and sold like cattle?

How was it that James Burbank, a partisan of the anti-slavery cause, a Northerner, hoping for the triumph of the North, had not been able to free the slaves on his plantation? Would he hesitate to do it when circumstances became favourable? Certainly not! And it was now only a question of weeks, of days perhaps, before the Federal army, which already occupied the outposts, would advance into Florida.

Already Burbank had done all he could to improve the lot of his slaves. There were about seven hundred blacks,

of both sexes, properly lodged in the large barracoons, well looked after and kindly treated, and worked well within their powers. The overseer had orders to treat them all with justice and consideration; and the duties were done none the worse for corporal punishment having for some time been abandoned at Camdless Bay. This was a striking contrast with the custom of the generality of Floridan plantations, and the system was not looked on with favour by James Burbank's neighbours. And, as may be imagined, this made matters somewhat embarrassing, particularly now the fortune of arms had come to the solution of the slavery question.

The slaves dwelt in healthy, comfortable huts. Grouped in fifties, these huts formed a dozen villages, otherwise called barracoons, by the side of a running stream. There the blacks lived with their wives and children. Each family was as much as possible employed in the same work in the fields, the forests or the workshops, so that its members were not scattered during working hours. At the head of these villages was a sub-overseer, acting as mayor practically, with his head-quarters in the private grounds of Camdless Bay. These grounds were enclosed by a high palisade, of which the pointed stakes rose vertically, half-hidden beneath the verdure of the exuberant vegetation. Inside the palisade rose the private house of the Burbank family. Half house and half castle, it had appropriately been called Castle House.

For many years Camdless Bay had belonged to the ancestors of James Burbank. When there was a fear of Indian depredations, the owners had fortified the principal house. The time was not very distant when General Jessup defended Florida against the Seminoles. The colonists had suffered much from these nomads. Not only did the Indians rob them, but they added murder to the burning of their homes. Even the towns were threatened with invasion and pillage. In many a spot rose the ruins that the bloodthirsty Indians left smoking behind them. Less than fifty miles from Camdless Bay there was still to be seen "the house of blood" in which Mr. Motte and his

wife and three daughters had been scalped and massacred by the Seminoles. But the war of extermination between the white man and the red man is practically over; the Seminoles were conquered, and sought refuge to the west of the Mississippi. People spoke of them no more, though a few bands still roamed among the marshes of Southern Florida.

It will therefore be understood that the houses of the colonists were built so as to defy a sudden attack of the Indians, and hold out until the arrival of battalions of volunteers, enrolled in the towns or neighbouring villages And on this plan Castle House had been designed.

It stood on a slight rise of the ground, in the centre of a small park of about three acres, situated a few hundred yards from the St. John's. A rather deep watercourse ran round the park, and the palisading on its inner bank completed the defence. The only entrance was by a little bridge thrown across the circular moat. Behind the rise, a mass of beautiful trees covered the slopes of the park. An avenue of young bamboos, with the stems crossing in pointed arches, formed a long nave, leading from the lawn to the landing-place. Beyond, among the trees, were green lawns and wide paths with white borders, ending in a sandy terrace along the principal front of Castle House.

The castle was irregularly built, and offered much of the unexpected in its grouping and of the capricious in its details. But should its assailants ever break through the park palisades, it would remain defensible, and could maintain a siege of some hours. Its windows on the ground-floor were protected by iron bars. The main door in the front face was as strong as a portcullis. At certain points along the walls, which were built of a sort of marble, were a few turrets, which rendered the defence easier, as they allowed of the aggressors being taken in flank. In short, with its openings reduced to such only as were strictly necessary, the central tower, on which flew the standard of the United States, its lines of battlements along some of the ridges, the slope of its wall at the foot, its high roof,

many pinnacles, the thickness of its inner walls, which here and there were loopholed, the place resembled a fortress much more than a dwelling house.

As we have said, it had been necessary to build it so for the security of its inhabitants at the time of the Indian troubles in Florida. There was even in existence a sort of subterranean tunnel which, after passing under the palisade and circular moat, put Castle House in communication with a little creek of the St. John's called Marine Creek. This tunnel could serve as a means of secret escape in case of extreme danger.

At the time in question, the Seminoles, having been driven out of the peninsula twenty years before, were no longer to be feared. But who could say what was reserved for the future? and might not the danger James Burbank had no reason to fear from the Indians, come from his compatriots? Was he not an isolated Northerner at the end of the Southern States, exposed to all the changes of a civil war, which had been hitherto most sanguinary and fertile in reprisals?

But the necessity of providing for the safety of Castle House had in no way interfered with its interior comfort. The rooms were large and luxuriantly and superbly furnished. The Burbank family were blessed with every comfort and every satisfaction fortune can give when it is united to artistic feeling on the part of its possessor.

Behind the house, in the private park, were splendid gardens, extending to the palisade. The stakes were hidden beneath climbing shrubs and passion-flowers, amid which humming-birds hopped in myriads. Orange-trees, olive-trees, fig-trees, pomegranate-trees, and pontederias with blue bouquets, and magnolias with calices of old ivory perfuming the air, palm-trees waving their fans in the breeze, garlands of violet-shaded cobœas, clumps of green rosetted tupeas, yuccas with their sharp clicking sabres, rosy rhododendrons, clumps of myrtle and shaddocks—in fact everything produced by the flora of a zone which touches the Tropics and could be gathered in its parterres to perfume the air or please the eye.

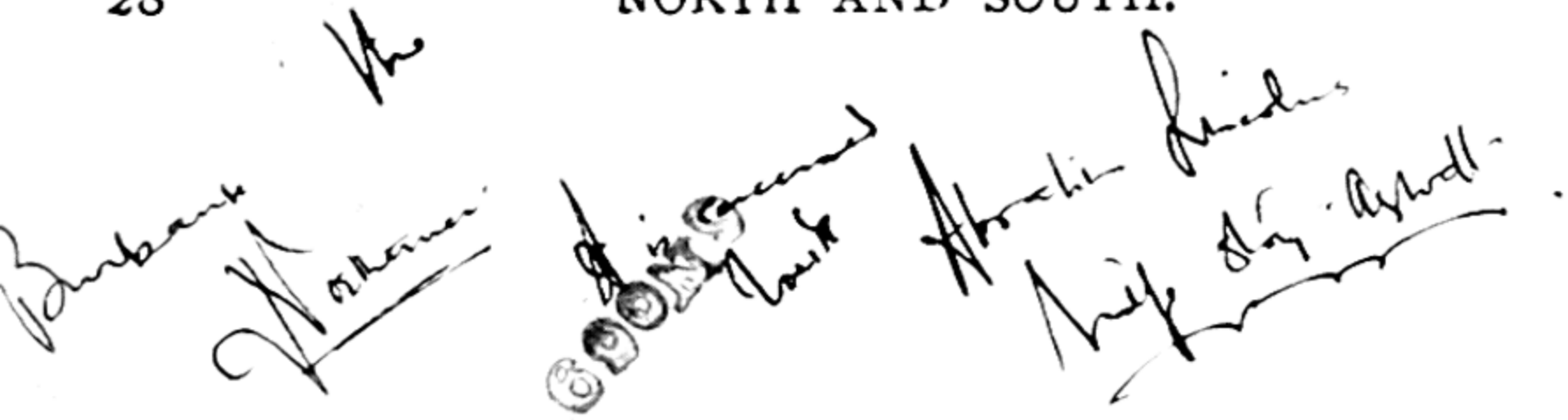
y. Spalding

At the extremity of the palisading, under the cypresses and baobabs, were the stables, coachhouses, kennels, dairy, and poultry-yard. Under the thick foliage of these fine trees, impenetrable by the sun, the domestic animals had nothing to fear from the heat of summer, and the running water brought in from the streams close by gave an agreeable and healthy freshness to all.

This private domain was, it will be seen, a marvellously well-arranged nook in the centre of James Burbank's establishment. No rattle from the cotton-mills, roar from the saw-mills, ring of the axes on the tree-trunks, nor any of the sounds which are inseparable from such an important concern, could be heard beyond the palisades.

The thousands of birds of the Floridan fauna would pass and flutter from tree to tree. But these winged songsters, whose plumage rivalled the brilliancy of the flowers, were as welcome as the perfumes which the breeze bore with it as it swept over the neighbouring woods and prairies.

Such was Camdless Bay, the plantation of James Burbank, one of the richest in eastern Florida.



CHAPTER III.

THE WAR OF SECESSION.

AND now for a few words on the war of secession, with which this history is intimately connected.

And in the first place let this be understood, as has been well said, in his remarkable "History of the Civil War in America," by the Comte de Paris, who was formerly one of General McClellan's aide-de-camps, this war was not caused by any question of tariffs, nor of a difference of origin between the North and the South. The Anglo-Saxon race reigns over the whole territory of the United States. The commercial question was never entertained in this terrible fratricidal strife. "It was slavery, which, prospering in one half of the Republic and abolished in the other, created two hostile societies. It had profoundly modified the manners of those where it prevailed, while leaving untouched the outward forms of government. It was not the pretext or the occasion, but the cause, and the only cause, of the antagonism which inevitably resulted in civil war."

In the slave states there were three classes. The lowest consisted of four millions of enslaved negroes, a third of the population. The highest was the caste of the slave-holders, comparatively uneducated, rich, scornful, who kept the direction of public affairs completely in their hands. Between these classes was the lower class of whites, turbulent, idle and miserable, ardent advocates for the maintenance of slavery for fear of seeing the freed negroes elevated to their level.

The Northerners had against them not only the rich proprietors, but also those whites who lived, especially in

the country, among the slave population. The strife was consequently frightful. In families such dissensions were produced that brothers fought against each other, some under the Federal, some under the Confederate flag. But a great nation could not hesitate to destroy slavery to its roots. In the last century the illustrious Franklin had demanded its abolition. In 1807 Jefferson had recommended Congress to "prohibit a traffic of which the morality, honour, and dearest interests of the country had long required the disappearance." The North was therefore in the right to march against the South and subdue it. And to follow that with a closer union between the elements of the Republic, and the destruction of that fatal, threatening illusion that the citizen owed obedience first to his own state, and in the second place to the federation.

It was in Florida that the first question as to slavery had arisen. At the commencement of the century a half-breed Indian chief, named Osceola, had for his wife a maroon slave born in the marshy part of Florida known as the Everglades. One day the woman was recaptured as a slave and taken away by force. Osceola raised the Indians, began an anti-slavery campaign, and was taken prisoner and died in his prison. But the war continued, and, says the historian Thomas Higginson, "the money it cost was three times as much as that paid to Spain for the purchase of Florida."

And now for the beginnings of the war of secession, and the state of affairs in the month of February, 1862, when James Burbank and his family were to experience such terrible counterblows that it has appeared interesting to us to make them the subject of this history.

On the 16th October, 1859, the heroic Captain John Brown, at the head of a small band of fugitive slaves, had seized on Harper's Ferry in Virginia. His object was to free the men of colour. He proclaimed it loudly. Beaten by the militia, he was taken prisoner, condemned to death, and hanged at Charleston on the 2nd of December, 1859, with six of his companions.

On the 20th of December, 1860, a convention assembled

in South Carolina and adopted with enthusiasm the proposal of secession. The following year, on the 4th of March, 1861, Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the Republic. The Southern States regarded his election as a menace to the institution of slavery. On the 11th of April, Fort Sumter, one of the forts defending Charleston harbour, fell into the power of the Southerners commanded by General Beauregard. North Carolina, Virginia, Arkansas, and Tennessee at once threw in their lot with the Separatists.

Seventy-five thousand volunteers were raised by the Federal Government. At the outset Washington, the capital of the United States of America, was prepared against a sudden attack, the arsenals of the North which were empty were revictualled—those of the South had been well provisioned by President Buchanan. War material was got together with extraordinary effort. Then Abraham Lincoln declared the Southern ports in a state of blockade.

Active hostilities broke out in Virginia. McClellan repulsed the rebels in the west; but on the 21st of July, at Bull Run, the Federal troops, under the orders of MacDowell, were routed, and fled to Washington. The Southerners feared no longer for the safety of Richmond, but the Northerners had much to fear for the capital of the American Republic. A few months afterwards, the Federals were again defeated at Bull's Bluff. These misfortunes were compensated for by the expeditions that put into the hands of the Unionists Fort Hatteras and Port Royal Harbour, which the Separatists never retook. At the end of 1861, the command-in-chief of the armies of the Union was given to Major-General George McClellan.

During this year the Confederate corsairs swept the seas of both worlds. They were welcomed in the ports of France, England, Spain, and Portugal—a great mistake which, by giving the Secessionists the rights of belligerents, resulted in encouraging and prolonging the civil war.

The naval events, which caused so much stir, were the appearance of the *Sumter* and her famous Captain Semmes; the appearance of the ram *Manassas;* on the 12th of October the sea-fight at the mouth of the Mississippi; on the 8th of November, the stoppage of the *Trent*, an English ship, on which Captain Wilkes captured the Confederate envoys—and which nearly brought on a war between Great Britain and the States.

Meanwhile Abolitionists and Slaveholders were engaged in sanguinary combats, with alternating success and defeat in the State of Missouri. One of the chief generals of the North, Lyon, was killed, and this necessitated the retreat of the Federals to Rolla, and the march of Price and his Confederates towards the North. There was a fight at Frederictown on the 21st of October, and at Springfield on the 25th, and on the 27th, Fremont occupied the latter town with his Federals. On the 19th of December, the fight at Belmont between Grant and Polk was indecisive. At length winter, which is always severe in North America, put an end to the operations.

In the first months of the year 1862, truly prodigious efforts were made by both sides.

In the North, Congress voted a levy of 500,000 volunteers—there were a million before the end of the struggle—and sanctioned a loan of 500 millions of dollars. Huge armies were created, the chief being that of the Potomac. Their generals were Banks, Butler, Sherman, McClellan, Meade, Thomas, Kearny, Halleck, to mention only the most famous. Infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers, were formed and organized. War material was manufactured at express speed, Minie and Colt carbines, rifled cannon on the Parrott and Rodman systems, smoothbore cannon and Dahlgren columbiads, howitzers, revolver-cannons, siege artillery, and shrapnel shell. They organized army telegraphs and army balloons, the reporting service of the large newspapers, the transport service employing 20,000 carts, drawn by 84,000 mules. Provisions of all kinds were

got in under the direction of the chief of the commissariat. New ships of the ram type were built on the plan of Colonel Ellet, and armoured gunboats were built on the plan of Commodore Foote, to make their first appearance in maritime war.

In the South equal zeal was shown. The cannon foundries of New Orleans and Memphis, and the forges of Tredegar, near Richmond, turned out their Parrotts and Rodmans. But that was not enough. The Confederate Government sent across to Europe. Liège and Birmingham sent shiploads of arms, and cannon on the Armstrong and Whitworth systems. Blockade-runners brought the war material into the ports, and took away cotton in exchange. Then the army was organized. Its generals were Johnston, Lee, Beauregard, Jackson, Crittenden, Floyd, and Pillow. Irregular troops, militia and guerillas, were raised in addition to the four hundred thousand volunteers enrolled for three years at the most, or one year at the least, voted by the Secessionist Congress on the 8th of August.

The preparations did not hinder the strife from beginning before the winter was half over. Of the slaveholding territory, the Federal Government occupied only Maryland, Western Virginia, some part of Kentucky, most part of Missouri, and a few points on the sea coast.

Hostilities first broke out again in the east of Kentucky. On the 7th of January, Garfield fought the Confederates at Middle Creek, and on the 25th they were beaten again at Logan Cross or Mill Springs. On the 2nd of February Grant embarked with two divisions on some of the large Tennessee steamboats, to support Foote's cuirassed flotilla. On the 6th, Fort Henry fell into his power. Thus was broken a link of the chain "on which," said the historian of this civil war, "rested the whole system of his adversary Johnston's defence." Cumberland and the capital of Tennessee were thus threatened, and were within easy reach of the Federal troops; and Johnston endeavoured to concentrate on Fort Donelson, so as to regain a surer base for the defensive.

At this time, another expedition, consisting of six thou-

sand men, under the orders of Burnside, and a flotilla of twenty-four armed steamers and fifty transports, descended the Chesapeake and assembled in Hampton Roads on the 12th of January. In face of violent storms it started on the 24th of January for Pimlico Sound, to capture Roanoke Island, and reduce the coast of North Carolina. But the island was fortified. On the west the channel was defended by a barrier of sunken ships. Batteries and field works made access difficult. Five or six thousand men with a flotilla of seven gunboats, were ready to withstand any attempt at landing. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the bravery of the defenders, on the 7th and 8th of February the island surrendered to Burnside, with twenty guns and more than two thousand prisoners. Next day the Federals were masters of Elizabeth City and the coast of Albemarle Sound, that is to say, the north of this inland sea.

But to conclude this description of the position of affairs up to the 6th of February, it is necessary to speak of the Confederate general, the old professor of chemistry, Jackson, the puritan soldier who defended Virginia. After the recall of Lee to Richmond he commanded the army. He left Winchester on the 13th of January, with his 10,000 men, then he crossed the Alleghanies, to advance on Bath on the Ohio railroad. Defeated by the climate, overwhelmed by the snowstorms, he was forced to return to Winchester, without having attained his object.

And now for that which concerns us more specially, on the southern coast from Carolina to Florida.

During the second half of 1861, the Northerners possessed sufficient swift vessels to police the seas, although they could not catch the famous *Sumter* which in January, 1862, put in at Gibraltar, before beginning her cruise in European waters. The *Jefferson Davis* endeavouring to escape from the Federals had fled to St. Augustine in Florida, and sunk as she entered the channel. Almost at the same time the *Anderson*, one of the cruisers off the Florida coast, captured the privateer *Beauregard*. But in England new ships were fitting out for the fray. It was then that President Lincoln's proclamation extended the blockade, a fictitious

blockade of 2800 miles. To watch them only two squadrons were available: one to blockade the Atlantic, the other the Gulf of Mexico.

On the 12th of October, for the first time, the Confederates endeavoured to clear the mouth of the Mississippi with the *Manassas*—the first ship plated with iron used in the war—and a flotilla of fire-ships. The attempt did not succeed, and the corvette *Richmond* escaped from capture, safe and sound, on the 29th of December, though a small steamer, the *Seabird*, carried off a Federal schooner in sight of Fort Monroe.

It was, however, necessary to have a point which could serve as a base of operation for the Atlantic cruisers. The Federal government resolved to seize on Fort Hatteras, which defends the channel of the same name, at that time much used by the blockade runners. Its capture was not easy. It was supported by a square redoubt, called Fort Clarke. A thousand men and the Seventh North Carolina regiment, were entrusted with its defence. The Federal squadron composed of two frigates, three corvettes, a despatch-boat, and two large steamers anchored in the passes on the 27th of August. Commodore Stringham and General Butler were in charge of the attack. The redoubt was taken. Fort Hatteras, after a long resistance, hoisted the white flag, and a base of operations was secured by the Northerners for the rest of the war.

In November the island of Santa Rosa, at the east of Pensacola, on the Gulf of Mexico, a dependency of Florida, fell into the hands of the Federals, notwithstanding the efforts of the Confederates.

The capture of Fort Hatteras not appearing sufficient for the proper conduct of their operations, it was decided to occupy other positions on the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Two steam frigates, the *Wabash* and *Susquehannah*, three sailing frigates, four corvettes, six gunboats, many despatch-boats, twenty-five colliers laden with provisions, and thirty-two steamers transporting 15,600 men under the orders of General Sherman, were placed under the command of Commodore Dupont. The flotilla

mustered on the 25th of October before Fort Monroe. After experiencing a terrible storm off Cape Hatteras, the fleet reached Hilton Head between Charlestown and Savannah, close to Port Royal Harbour, one of the most important in the States, and where General Ripley held command. Forts Walker and Beauregard defended the entrance, about two miles and a half apart; eight steamers also formed part of the defences, and the bar rendered the harbour almost impregnable to an enemy's fleet.

On the 5th of November, the channel having been buoyed, Dupont entered the harbour after a cannonade, but he was not able to land Sherman's troops. On the 7th, in the afternoon, he attacked Fort Walker and then Fort Beauregard. He overwhelmed them with his storm of shell. The forts were evacuated; the Federals took possession of them almost without a struggle; and Sherman occupied the position which was of so much importance for the military operations that were to follow.

This was a blow at the very heart of the Southern States. The neighbouring islands fell one after the other into the power of the Federals, even Tybee Island and Fort Pulaski which commanded the Savannah river. At the end of the year Dupont was master of the five great bays of North Edisto, Saint Helena, Port Royal, Tybee, Warsaw, and all the islands scattered along the coast of Carolina and Georgia. And on the 1st of January, 1862, a final success enabled him to reduce the Confederate works on the banks of the Coosaw.

Such was the situation of the belligerents at the commencement of February, 1862. Such was the progress of the Federals towards the South, when the fleet of Dupont and the troops of Sherman were menacing Florida.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BURBANK FAMILY.

It was a few minutes past seven when James Burbank and Edward Carrol mounted the steps on which opened the principal door of Castle House, looking towards the St. John's. Zermah, holding the little girl by the hand, walked behind them. They entered the hall, which was a kind of large vestibule with its back rounded into a dome, and containing the double twist of the great staircase which led to the upper floors.

Mrs. Burbank met them, accompanied by Perry, the chief overseer of the plantation.

"No news from Jacksonville?"

"No."

"No news from Gilbert?"

"Yes—a letter."

"Heaven be praised!"

Such were the first questions and answers that passed between Mrs. Burbank and her husband. James Burbank, after kissing his wife and little Dy, opened the letter which was handed to him. It had not been opened in his absence, for, in consideration of the existing state of affairs, Mrs. Burbank thought it best that her husband should be the first to know what it contained.

"This letter did not come by the post?" asked Burbank.

"No, sir," said Perry, "that would have been too risky."

"Who brought it?"

"A Georgia man Mr. Gilbert felt he could trust."

"When did it arrive?"

"Yesterday."

"And the man?"

"Went away this evening."

"Well paid for his work?"

"Yes, well paid," said Mrs. Burbank, "but by Gilbert, and he would not take anything from us."

The hall was lighted by two lamps placed on a marble table before a large sofa. James Burbank went and sat at the table, and his wife and daughter sat near him. Edward Carrol, after shaking hands with his sister, had thrown himself into an arm-chair. Zermah and Perry were standing together near the stairs; both of them were sufficiently of the family for the letter to be read in their presence.

The letter was opened.

"It is dated the 3rd of February," said James Burbank.

"Four days after date!" said Carrol, "that is a long time under the circumstances."

"Read it, papa, read it," said the little girl, with a very natural impatience at her age.

"This is what it says,—

"On board the *Wabash*, at the anchorage of Edisto.
"3rd February, 1862.

"DEAR FATHER,—I begin by sending my love to my mother, my little sister and yourself, not forgetting Uncle Carrol, and to omit nothing, I send Zermah all the remembrances of her husband, my brave and devoted Mars. We are going on as well as possible, and should very much like to be with you. It will not be long before we are, notwithstanding Mr. Perry, who, on seeing the progress of the North, must be much concerned—obstinate slave-owner as he is, the worthy overseer!"

"That is one for you, Perry," said Carrol.

"Every man is welcome to his ideas," said Perry, in the tone of a man who had no intention of giving up his own.

Burbank continued,—

"This letter will reach you by a man I can depend on. You will have heard that Commodore Dupont's squadron

has gained possession of Port Royal Harbour and the neighbouring islands. The North is gradually beating the South, and it is very likely that the Federal Government will occupy the chief ports of Florida. They are talking of an expedition under Dupont and Sherman at the end of the month. This is very probable, and we shall occupy the bay of St. Andrew's, whence we shall advance into Florida. I am in a hurry to get there, dear father, and particularly with our victorious flotilla. The situation of my people among the slave-holding population, makes me very anxious; but the time is coming when triumph will wait upon the ideas that have always been to the fore at Camdless Bay. If I could get away I should be with you in twenty-four hours; but that would be too risky for you as well as for me, and you must be patient. In a few months we shall again meet together at Castle House. And now I must end, asking myself if I have forgotten anybody in my message. And I have! I have forgotten Mr. Stannard and my charming Alice, whom I am longing to see. Give my regards to her father, and to her give more than my regards.

"Respectfully and sincerely yours,

"GILBERT BURBANK."

James Burbank laid the letter on the table, and Mrs. Burbank lifted it to her lips, then little Dy put a sounding kiss on her brother's signature.

"Brave fellow!" said Edward Carrol.

"And brave man!" added Mrs. Burbank, looking at Zermah, who had clasped the little girl in her arms.

"We must tell Alice," said Mrs. Burbank, "that we have received a letter from Gilbert."

"Yes, I will write to her," said James Burbank. "Besides, in a day or two I must go to Jacksonville and see Stannard. Since Gilbert wrote there may be other news of the proposed expedition. May our Northern friends soon come, and may Florida again be under the Union flag! Our position here may end in being untenable."

In fact, as the war approached the South, a change took

place in Floridan opinion on the subject which had set the United States at variance. Up to then slavery had not been extensively developed in the old Spanish colony, which had not taken part in the Secession movement with the same ardour as Virginia and the Carolinas. But leaders had sprung up among the slave party, and now these people, ready for outbreak at any moment, having everything to gain by disturbances, were in the majority among the authorities of St. Augustine, and principally of Jacksonville, where their supporters were the vilest of the populace. Hence the position of James Burbank, whose birth and ideas we know, had become an anxious one.

Twenty years before, James Burbank had left New Jersey, where he still possessed some property, and came to Camdless Bay with his wife and his son, then four years old. We know how the plantation had prospered, thanks to his own intelligent labours and the assistance of his brother-in-law, Edward Carrol. He had taken a great liking to the vast establishment which had been handed down to him by his ancestors. Here was born his second child, little Dy, fifteen years after he had fixed his home in the South.

He was then forty-six years old, of strong constitution, accustomed to work, and never sparing himself. We know he was of energetic character; firmly attached to his opinions, he did his utmost to let them be widely known. He was tall and slightly grey; his face had a somewhat severe but frank and encouraging look. With the goatee of the Americans of the North, without whiskers or moustache, he was a typical New England Yankee. Throughout the plantation he was liked, for he was kind, and he was obeyed, for he was just. His blacks were devoted to him, and he waited not without impatience for circumstances to permit of his giving them their liberty. His brother-in-law was about the same age, and took charge chiefly of the accounts of Camdless Bay. Carrol was quite at one with him in everything, and shared in his view of the slave question.

Mr. Perry, the overseer, was the only one of a different

opinion in this little world of Camdless Bay. Let it not be thought that this worthy man ill-treated the slaves. Far from it. He even tried to make them as happy as their condition allowed him.

"But," said he, "there are warm countries in which work on the land can only be done by blacks, and blacks who are not slaves are no longer blacks!"

Such was his theory, which he discussed on every occasion that offered. But he was in no way disconcerted at the fortune of war which favoured the anti-slavery cause. He was, in short, an excellent fellow, and a brave one too, and when James Burbank and Edward Carrol had joined the militia, known as "the minute men," from being ready to start at any minute, he had gallantly joined them in their last struggle with the Seminoles.

Mrs. Burbank was at this time thirty-nine years of age. She was still very handsome. Her daughter would one day resemble her. James Burbank had found in her a loving, affectionate companion, to whom he owed most of the happiness of his life. The unselfish woman lived but for her husband and her children, whom she adored, and for whose safety she felt the keenest apprehension now that circumstances had brought the civil war into Florida. Diana, or rather Dy, as she was familiarly called, a child of six, quick, loving, and happy, lived at Castle House with her mother, but Gilbert was away, his absence causing continued anxiety, which Mrs. Burbank could not always dissimulate.

Gilbert was then in his twenty-fifth year, and in him were conspicuous the moral qualities of his father, with a little less stiffness, and the same physical qualities, with a little more grace and charm. A bold companion, skilled in all bodily exercises, he was as accomplished as a horseman as he was as a seaman and hunter. To the great alarm of his mother, the huge forests and marshes of Duval county had often been the scene of his exploits, as had the creeks and passes of the St. John's up to its furthest mouth at Pablo. Gilbert felt himself fully trained for the work of a soldier when the first shots were fired in the

war. He considered that his duty called him to the Federal troops, and he did not hesitate. He asked to be allowed to go. Great was the grief he thus caused his mother, and great was the danger to all, but James Burbank did not dream for a moment of refusing his son's request. He thought, like him, that it was a duty, and everything must give place to duty.

Gilbert, then, set out for the North; but his departure was kept as secret as possible. If it was known at Jacksonville that James Burbank's son had entered the Northern service, reprisals would at once have been taken on Camdless Bay. The young man had been given letters of introduction to his father's friends in New Jersey. He had always shown a taste for the sea, and his friends had had no difficulty in procuring him an appointment in the Federal navy. Promotion was rapid in those days, and as Gilbert was not one of those who remained in the rear, he soon got on. The Washington Government had its eyes on this young man who in the position he found his family, did not hesitate to offer his services. Gilbert distinguished himself at the attack of Fort Sumter. He was on the *Richmond* when that ship was rammed by the *Manassas* at the mouth of the Mississippi, and contributed largely to recapture her. After this affair he was made an ensign, although he had not been through the naval school at Annapolis any more than many of the other officers who had been transferred from the mercantile marine. In his new capacity he joined the squadron of Commodore Dupont, and assisted at the brilliant attack on Fort Hatteras and the capture of the Seas Islands. During the last few weeks he had been a lieutenant on one of Dupont's gunboats which were about to force the mouths of the St. John's.

Gilbert himself longed for an early termination of the war. He loved and was loved; and when his service was over, he would return to Camdless Bay and marry the daughter of one of his father's best friends.

Mr. Stannard did not belong to the class of Floridan planters. A widower, and a man of fortune, he had devoted

himself entirely to the education of his daughter. He lived at Jacksonville, so that to get to Camdless Bay he had only to go up three or four miles of the river. For fifteen years not a week had passed without his visiting the Burbanks. It might almost be said that Gilbert and Alice were brought up together, and a marriage that had been planned for years had now been decided on, which would bring happiness to both. Although Walter Stannard was a native of the South, he was an anti-slavery man, as were several others of his Floridan fellow-citizens; but these were not numerous enough to withstand the majority of the inhabitants of Jacksonville, whose opinions daily tended more and more in favour of the Separatist movement. Stannard and his friends began consequently to be looked upon unfavourably by the leaders of the county, and especially by the small whites and populace, who were ready for any excess.

Walter Stannard was born at New Orleans. Mrs. Stannard was a Frenchwoman; she had died young, and left to her daughter those noble qualities which are peculiar to French blood. When Gilbert went away, Alice had shown an energy that had given Mrs. Burbank much comfort and support. Although she loved Gilbert as she herself was loved, she invariably told his mother that it was his duty to go and fight for the good cause, to fight for the freedom of a race, and, in short, for liberty. She was then nineteen; fair, with eyes almost blue, of warm complexion, elegant figure, and distinguished features. She might be a little serious, but so mobile was her expression, that the least smile would light up her beautiful face.

The Burbank family would not be known in all its most faithful members, if we omitted to say something of its two servants, Mars and Zermah.

As we have seen from his letter, Gilbert had not gone away alone. Mars, the husband of Zermah, had accompanied him. He could not have found a more devoted companion than this slave from Camdless Bay, who had become free by setting foot on anti-slavery soil. But to

Mars, Gilbert was always "the young master," and he would not leave him, although the Federal Government had already formed regiments of negroes, where he would have found a place.

Mars and Zermah were not of the negro race by birth. They were half-breeds. Zermah's brother was that heroic slave, Robert Small, who, four months later, captured from the Confederates in the very bay of Charleston, a steamer with two guns, which he took over to the Federal fleet.

The marriage of Zermah and Mars was a happy one; which more than once, during its first years, the odious traffic in slaves had threatened to break. It was at the moment when they were about to be separated by the fortune of the auction-room, that they came to Camdless Bay.

These were the circumstances.

Zermah was thirty-one years old, Mars thirty-five. Seven years before, they had been married when they belonged to a Mr. Tickborn, whose plantation was on the river, twenty miles above Camdless Bay. For some years Tickborn had had business transactions with Texar, who was often a welcome visitor to the plantation. There was nothing surprising in this, for Tickborn was not thought much of in the county. His abilities were not very brilliant; and, his affairs not prospering, he was obliged to put up a lot of his slaves for sale.

At this very time Zermah, who was very badly treated like all the rest on Tickborn's plantation, brought a baby into the world, which was immediately taken away from her, for while she was in prison for a crime of which she was innocent, her baby died in her arms. It may be guessed what was the grief of Zermah, and the anger of Mars. But what could they do against a master to whom belonged their flesh, living or dead, because he had bought it?

To this sorrow another no less terrible was added. The day after their child died, Mars and Zermah were packed off to the auctioneer, and threatened with separation.

Yes! The consolation of finding themselves together under a new master was denied them. A man presented himself who offered to buy Zermah, and Zermah alone, although he did not own a plantation. This man was Texar. His friend Tickborn was about to sign the agreement when, at the last moment, another bidder appeared on the scene and offered a higher price. This was James Burbank, who happened to be at the sale, and was touched at the fate of the unhappy half-breed, praying in vain that she should not be separated from her husband.

Burbank was in want of a nurse for his little girl, and learning that one of Tickborn's slaves had just lost her child, he came to look at her; but, touched by Zermah's tears, he did not hesitate to offer for herself and husband a price that exceeded all that had been bid up to then.

Texar knew James Burbank. He had been several times warned off his plantation as a suspicious person. And from this arose the hatred which Texar had vowed to all the family of Camdless Bay. Texar tried to bid against the rich planter. It was in vain. He grew obstinate. He rose to double the price that Tickborn had asked for the half-breed and her husband. This made Burbank pay very dearly for them—but he got them.

And so, not only were Zermah and Mars not separated from each other, but they had entered the service of the best of the planters in Florida. Six years afterwards, Zermah was still in all the maturity of her half-breed beauty. Of energetic character, heartily devoted to her master, she had more than once had occasion —and would soon have occasion again—to prove her fidelity. Mars was worthy of the wife to whom the charitable act of James Burbank had for ever attached him. He was a remarkable specimen of those Africans in whom there is a large proportion of Creole blood. Tall, stout, courageous to a fault, he served his new master well.

These two new servants were not treated like slaves. They had soon become appreciated for their kindness

and intelligence. Mars was specially occupied in looking after young Gilbert; Zermah was Diana's nurse. In such positions they were bound to be admitted to a certain intimacy with the family.

Zermah always felt a mother's love for the little girl, the love she could not bear the child she had lost. Dy returned it, and the filial affection of the one responded to the maternal cares of the other, and Mrs. Burbank was as friendly to Zermah as she was grateful.

The same feeling existed between Gilbert and Mars. Active and strong, the half-breed had made his young master an expert in all manly exercises, and James Burbank could only congratulate himself at having found him for his son.

Never had Zermah and Mars been so happy, and that after leaving the hands of Tickborn and nearly falling into those of Texar. They were never to forget it.

CHAPTER V

BLACK CREEK.

At dawn, the morning after the *Shannon's* journey down the St. John's, a man was walking on the bank of one of the islets at the bottom of the lagoon of Black Creek. It was Texar. A few steps away was an Indian sitting in the skiff which had met the steamer. It was Squambo.

After walking up and down for a minute or two, Texar stopped under a magnolia-tree, drew down one of the lower branches and picked off a leaf and its stem. Then he drew from his note-book a short letter, containing only three or four words written in ink. He rolled up the letter and stuffed it into one of the lower veins of the leaf. This was done so cleverly that the leaf lost nothing of its usual look.

"Squambo!" said Texar.

"Master!" replied the Indian.

"Go—you know where!"

Squambo took the leaf, put it in the bow of the skiff, sat down in the stern, paddled himself off, turned the extreme point of the islet, and entered the tortuous passage under the thick bower of trees.

The lagoon is cut up into a labyrinth of channels, among which only a man thoroughly conversant with the tangled network of black waters could find his way.

However, Squambo did not hesitate. Where no one could see an outlet he boldly entered with his skiff. The lower branches that he lifted up fell behind him, and left no trace of anything having passed beneath them. Along winding channels, no larger than drains, he paddled his canoe. Quite a world of aquatic birds flew up at his approach. Slimy eels, with suspicious

heads, slipped under the roots which emerged from the water. Squambo cared for none of these things, no more than he did for the sleeping caymans, which he could wake by striking them as they lay on their beds of mud. He kept on without a stoppage, and when he had no room to paddle, he pushed himself along as if with a boat-hook.

Although it was now broad daylight, and the heavy night mist had begun to evaporate under the first rays of the sun, nothing could be seen of it beneath this impenetrable roof of verdure. Even in the noonday sun no ray of light could pierce it. All was shrouded in semi-obscurity, which suited well the crawling creatures that swarmed in its black waters, and the thousands of aquatic plants that floated on their surface.

For half an hour Squambo advanced from one island to another. When he stopped, it was because his skiff had reached one of the last branches of the creek.

At this spot, where the marshy part of the creek ended, the trees were less crowded and intergrown, and the light of day found admittance. Beyond was a vast prairie bordered with forest, but slightly above the level of the St. John's. The foot, in treading on the marshy ground, gave the same sensation as if treading on an elastic mattress. A few sassafras bushes, with slender leaves and violet berries dotted the surface with their capricious zigzags.

After mooring his canoe to one of the twigs on the bank, Squambo jumped ashore. The night mist was drying off, the prairie, quite deserted, was gradually rising from the fog. Among a group of five or six trees close by was a magnolia of moderate height.

The Indian stepped towards this tree. He reached it in a few minutes, and drew down one of the lower branches. To its end he fixed the leaf that Texar had given him, then the bough, left to itself, sprung up, and the leaf was lost in the foliage.

Squambo returned to his skiff, and then paddled back to the islet where his master awaited him.

Black Creek is so called from the colour of its waters,

and covers an area of about six hundred acres. Fed by the St. John's, it is a sort of archipelago quite impenetrable to those who do not know its infinite windings. A hundred islands dot its surface ; no bridges or causeways join them. A few high branches interlace above the thousands of channels that separate but do not form easy communication lines between the different points of the lagoon.

One of these islands, nearly in the centre of the system, is the most important, on account of its size—some twenty acres—and its elevation, five or six feet above the mean tide of the St. John's.

At some distant period, this island had served as the site of a fortress, a sort of blockhouse, now abandoned —at least, in a military sense. Its palisades, half ruined by rot, still stood beneath the large trees, magnolias, cypresses, oaks, black walnuts, and austral pines, interlaced by festoons of cobœas and other endless creepers.

Beyond the outer ring the eye could make out under the heap of verdure the geometrical lines of the little fortress, or rather the outpost, which had never been intended to hold more than a score of men. Narrow loopholes peeped out of the wooden walls. Turfed roofs covered them with a carapace of earth. Inside were a few rooms arranged round a central apartment, containing a store of provisions and munitions. To enter the fortress, it was necessary to get through the palisades at the narrow postern, then to cross the yard, planted with a few trees, and mount a few steps built up of boards. These led to the only door giving admittance to the interior, and was merely an embrasure that had been altered to suit the purpose.

Such was the usual retreat of Texar—a retreat which nobody knew. There, hidden from all eyes, he lived with this Squambo, who was devoted to a master of whom he did not think much, and with five or six slaves, who thought even less of him.

This islet of Black Creek was, it will be seen, some distance from the wealthy establishments on each side of the

river. There was barely a living on it for Texar and his companions, whose wants were not great. A few domestic animals, half a dozen acres planted with potatoes, yams, cucumbers, twenty fruit-trees, almost in their wild state, —that was all, without counting what the hunter could find in the neighbouring forests, or the fisherman in the lagoon, which never failed to yield its harvest. But, doubtless, the dwellers at Black Creek had other resources, of which only Texar and Squambo knew the secret.

The safety of the blockhouse was almost assured by its situation in such an inaccessible spot. Besides, who would seek to attack it, and why? In any case, any suspicious approach would be signalled at once by the dogs of the island, two of those ferocious bloodhounds imported from the Caribbees, formerly employed by the Spaniards to hunt down the negroes.

Such was Texar's dwelling, and it was worthy of him. Now for Texar himself.

Texar was then about thirty-five. He was of medium height, and of vigorous constitution, hardened by the adventurous life in the open air which had always been his. A Spaniard by birth, he did not hide his origin. His hair was black and coarse, his eyebrows thick, his eyes greenish, his mouth large, with thin indrawn lips, as if it had been made by a sabre-stroke, his nose short, and his nostrils like those of a wild beast. His whole physiognomy denoted craft and violence. He had formerly grown his full beard; but for the last two years, after it had been half burnt in some affair that no one knew anything about, he had shaved it off, and the cruelty of his features was rendered all the more apparent.

Twelve years before, this adventurer had come to settle in Florida in this abandoned blockhouse, the possession of which nobody thought of disputing. Whence came he? Nobody knew. What had been his former life? It was said, and rightly so, that he had been a slave-dealer, and had sold his cargoes of blacks in the ports of Georgia and the Carolinas. Had he made a fortune in this odious trade?

It did not seem like it. And, in fact, his reputation was of the slightest even in a country where men of his sort are numerous.

Nevertheless, if Texar was better known than respected, that did not prevent his exercising a real influence in the county, and particularly at Jacksonville, although it was, it is true, among the least reputable inhabitants. He often went to the chief town on business, which he never spoke about, and had made a number of friends among the small whites and more objectionable people of the place. This we have seen when he was returning to St. Augustine with his companions. His influence extended to a few planters on the St. John's, whom he sometimes visited, though they never visited him, for no one knew of his retreat at Black Creek.

Sport was a natural pretext for this intercourse, which established itself without difficulty among people of the same habits and tastes. This influence had grown during the last few years, owing to the opinions which Texar ardently defended. The slave question had hardly brought about the division between the United States, than the Spaniard had posed as the most obstinate and determined of slavery partisans. It should be understood that he had little real interest in the matter, for his slaves only amounted to half a dozen. It was the principle he sought to defend. By what means? By an appeal to the most hateful passions, by exciting the cupidity of the populace, by urging them to pillage, incendiarism, even to murder, against the inhabitants or planters who shared in the ideas of the Northerners. And now this dangerous adventurer was seeking to supersede the civil authorities of Jacksonville, men of moderate opinions and high character, by the most furious of his partisans. By becoming master of the county, he would have a free field for the exercise of his personal vengeance.

It will be understood from this, why James Burbank and other planters had not neglected to keep an eye on the proceedings of such a man, whose evil instincts had

already made him formidable; and why the hate on one side and defiance on the other had been augmented by the approaching events.

Besides, there was much in the past life of Texar after he had retired from trade which was suspicious. During the last outbreak of the Seminoles, everything seemed to prove that he had a secret understanding with them. Had he told them what blows to strike, what plantations to attack? Had he helped them in their ambushes and surprises? There was a strong suspicion that this was the case, and the magistrates had issued a warrant against the Spaniard, and brought him to trial. But Texar had pleaded an alibi, a plan of defence of which he again availed himself later on; and it was proved he could not have taken part in the attack on a farm in Duval county, when at the same moment he was at Savannah, in the State of Georgia, about forty miles to the north.

During the following years there were many serious robberies, sometimes from plantations, sometimes from travellers. Was Texar an author or accomplice in these crimes? Suspicions were strong, but as there was no proof, nothing could be done.

At last an opportunity offered which seemed to bring this hitherto unseizable malefactor within reach of the law; and this was the affair for which he had the day before been brought before the court at St. Augustine.

Eight days before, James Burbank, Carrol, and Stannard were returning from visiting a plantation not far from Camdless Bay, when about seven o'clock in the evening, as night was falling, they heard cries of distress. They came to the spot whence the cries proceeded, and found themselves in front of the buildings of an isolated farm. The buildings were on fire. The farm had been previously pillaged by half-a-dozen men who had just dispersed. The authors of the crime were not far off. Two of them could be seen running away through the woods.

James Burbank and his friends courageously started in pursuit, and the chase took them towards Camdless Bay.

It was in vain. The incendiaries escaped in the woods. But Burbank, Carrol, and Stannard had recognized one of them. It was the Spaniard.

And more than this—and corroborating the proof—at the instant this individual had disappeared on the boundary of Camdless Bay, Zermah, who was passing, had been knocked aside by him. And she, like the others, recognized him as Texar, running at full speed.

It is easy to imagine that such an affair would make considerable stir in the county. A robbery, followed by incendiarism, was a most serious crime where the plantations were spread over a large extent of country. Burbank brought a formal accusation against Texar, and the authorities took proceedings.

The Spaniard was brought to St. Augustine before the Recorder, and then, when confronted by the witnesses, James Burbank, Walter Stannard, Edward Carrol, and Zermah, was unanimously recognized as the man who was running away from the fire. There could be no mistake as far as they were concerned. Texar was one of the authors of the crime.

The Spaniard, for his defence, brought a number of witnesses to St. Augustine. They declared that on the evening in question they were with Texar at Jacksonville, in the tienda of Torilla, a sufficiently ill-famed drinking-shop in those parts. Texar had not left them all the evening. And that there could be no mistake about this, at the very time the crime was committed, the Spaniard had had a dispute with one of them which had ended in blows and threats, for which legal proceedings would probably be taken.

At this evidence, which was beyond suspicion—for some of the witnesses were strangers to Texar—the magistrate at St. Augustine could only close the inquiry and allow the defendant his expenses.

The alibi had thus been once more fully established to the advantage of this strange individual

It was after this affair, and in company with his witnesses

that Texar had returned to St. Augustine on the evening of the 7th of February. We have seen how he conducted himself on board the *Shannon* while the steamer descended the river. Then, on the skiff brought to meet him by Squambo, he had regained the abandoned blockhouse.

Squambo was a Seminole, intelligent and crafty, and had become the confidant of Texar, who had taken him into his service immediately after the last expedition of the Indians with which his name had been mixed up.

The Spaniard had resolved to revenge himself on James Burbank by all possible means. Amid the many conjunctions that the war daily gave rise to, if Texar could upset the authorities of Jacksonville he could make himself formidable to Camdless Bay. James Burbank was of such energetic and determined character that he had no fear of such a man, but Mrs. Burbank had only too many reasons to tremble for her husband and her family.

And all the more would she have been anxious had she known that Texar suspected Gilbert Burbank of having joined the Northern army. How had he learnt this, for the departure had been secret? Probably from his spies.

If Texar thought that James Burbank's son was in the Federal ships under the orders of Dupont, would he not probably devise some trap for the young lieutenant? Yes! And if he could entice him on to Floridan territory and capture him, we can imagine what would be his fate at the hands of these Southerners, exasperated at the progress of the Northern arms.

Such was the state of affairs when this story begins. Such was the position of the Federals on the maritime frontier of Florida, of the Burbanks in Duval county, and of Texar not only at Jacksonville but throughout the slave territories. If the Spaniard could gain his ends, if the authorities could be replaced by his partisans, it would be easy for him to send forth on Camdless Bay a populace maddened against the Abolitionists.

About an hour after Squambo had left Texar, he

returned. He drew his skiff to the bank, entered the palisades, and mounted the steps into the blockhouse.

"Is it done?" asked Texar.

"It is done, master."

"And—nothing?"

"Nothing."

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CHAPTER VI.

JACKSONVILLE.

"YES, Zermah, yes, you were created and placed in the world to be a slave!" said the overseer, mounting his favourite hobby. "Yes! a slave, and never to be a free creature."

"That is not my opinion," replied Zermah calmly, without the least animation, so many had been these discussions with the overseer of Camdless Bay.

"It is possible, Zermah! But in any case you will in the long run come over to the opinion that no equality can exist between the whites and the blacks."

"It already exists, Mr. Perry, and it has always existed."

"You are mistaken, Zermah, and the proof is that the whites are ten times, twenty times—what am I talking about?—a hundred times more numerous on the earth than the blacks?"

"And it is on that account that they have made slaves of them," answered Zermah, "they had the strength and they abused it. But if the blacks had been in the majority, the whites would have been the slaves! Or rather they would not, for the blacks would have shown more justice, and certainly less cruelty."

Do not let it be supposed that this conversation hindered Zermah and the overseer from remaining on good terms with each other. At the moment they had nothing else to do but talk. They might, perhaps, have chosen a more useful subject of conversation, and they doubtless would have done so had it not been for the overseer's mania for continually discussing the slave question.

The two were seated in the stern of one of the Camdless

Bay boats, worked by four men from the plantation. They were crossing the river, taking advantage of the ebbing tide, on their way to Jacksonville. The overseer had some of Mr. Burbank's business matters to attend to, and Zermah was going to buy a few things for little Dy.

It was the 10th of February. Three days before James Burbank had returned to Castle House, and Texar to Black Creek after the affair at St. Augustine.

The day before Mr. Stannard had heard from Camdless Bay, about the last letter from Gilbert. The news did not arrive any too soon for Alice, whose life had been one of continual anxiety since the outbreak of the war.

The boat under her lateen-sail slipped along swiftly. In a quarter of an hour she reached Jacksonville. The overseer had, therefore, little time to develop his pet theory, but he made the best of it.

"No, Zermah," said he. "No! If the blacks had been in the majority, it would have made no difference. And I tell you this, that whatever may be the result of the war, we shall certainly go back to slavery, for slaves are necessary to work the plantations."

"Mr. Burbank does not think so, as you know," said Zermah.

"I know, but I think Mr. Burbank is wrong notwithstanding the respect I have for him. A black ought to be part of the estate in the same way as the animals and implements. If a horse could go away when it chose, if a plough could change hands when it pleased, no work would be possible. Let Mr. Burbank emancipate his slaves, and you will see what will become of Camdless Bay."

"He would have done so already," said Zermah, "if circumstances had allowed him to do so. And would you like to know what will happen when the emancipation of the slaves is proclaimed at Camdless Bay? Not a single black will leave the plantation, and nothing will be changed, except the right to treat them as beasts. And, as you have never exercised that right, Camdless Bay will remain as it was."

"Do you consider you have converted me to your ideas?" asked the overseer.

"Not in the least. It would be useless to do so, and for a very simple reason."

"What is that?"

"That at the bottom you think just the same as Mr. Burbank, Mr. Carrol, Mr. Stannard, and every one else who has a generous heart and a just mind."

"Never, Zermah, never! And I even affirm that what I say is in the best interests of the blacks. If you leave them to themselves they will perish, and the race will soon disappear."

"I know nothing about that, Mr. Perry. But anyhow, better the race should disappear than be condemned to the perpetual degradation of slavery."

The overseer would have replied, for he had by no means reached the end of his arguments; but the sail was taken in and the boat ran alongside the pier, there to await the return of Zermah and the overseer, who landed at once and set off about their business.

Jacksonville is situated on the left bank of the St. John's, at the end of a somewhat low plain, surrounded by an horizon of magnificent forests, which form an ever-verdant frame. Fields of maize and sugar-cane and rice, particularly by the river side, occupy a part of the plain.

Twelve years ago Jacksonville was but a big village, with a suburb, where the black population lived in huts built of mud and reeds. At the time of our story the village was becoming a town. Its houses were becoming more comfortable, its streets better planned and better kept, and the number of its inhabitants doubled. And the year before the chief town of Duval county had gained considerably by being united by railway to Tallahassee, which is the capital of Florida.

The overseer and Zermah noticed that there was a good deal of excitement in the town. Some hundreds of the inhabitants, Southerners of American birth, and mulattoes and half-breeds of Spanish origin, were waiting for the arrival of the steamboat, of which the smoke was in sight

down stream over a low point of the St. John's. Some even, in order to reach the vessel more quickly, had started towards her in rowing-boats, and others had gone off in a few of those one-masted dogger-boats which are so common at Jacksonville.

There had been serious news from the war the evening before. The scheme of operations hinted at in Gilbert Burbank's letter had become partly known. It had been ascertained that Commodore Dupont's flotilla was getting ready for sea, and that General Sherman was to take his troops on board. Where was the expedition going? They could not say for certain, but everything pointed to the St. John's and the coast of Florida as being its object.

When the steamer, which came from Fernandina, had stopped at Jacksonville, her passengers could only confirm that news. They even added that Commodore Dupont would probably anchor in St. Andrew's Bay, while waiting for a favourable moment to force the passes at Amelia Island and the estuary of the St. John's.

Immediately the mob swarmed up into the town, putting to noisy flight the flock of urubus which do the scavengering of the streets. Shouts arose, "Down with the Northerners! Death to the Northerners!" Such were the cries that Texar's friends started to further excite the already excited population. The crowd gathered in front of the court-house, the police-office, and the episcopal church. The authorities would have more trouble in quieting the out-break, particularly as Jacksonville, as we have already remarked, was divided on this slave question. And in times of trouble, the noisiest and the hastiest make the law, and the moderate men eventually submit to their domination.

Naturally in the taverns and tiendas the shouts were the loudest. There it was that the plans were formed for offering an indomitable resistance to the invasion.

"Let us send the militia to Fernandina," said one.

"Let us sink some ships in the channel of the St. John's," said another.

"Let us run up some earthworks round the city, and get the guns for them," said another.

"Let us send for help by the railway from Fernandina to Keys."

"Let us put out the light at Pablo, and so prevent the enemy's fleet getting in at night."

"Let us put down torpedoes in the river."

The torpedo was almost a new thing in the American war, and although they were not too well acquainted with the way to manage it, they were evidently longing to use it.

"Above all," said one of the most excited orators at the tienda of Torillo, "we should send to gaol all the Northerners in the town, and all those Southerners who think with them."

It would have been very strange if somebody had not brought forward this proposition, the *ultima ratio* of sectaries everywhere. And, of course, it was received with cheers. Luckily for the honest people of Jacksonville the magistrates were to hesitate some time before giving in to this popular prayer.

As she passed through the streets, Zermah took careful notice of what was going on, so as to tell her master. He would be seriously affected by the movement. If violent measures were taken, such measures would not stop at the town. They would extend beyond it to the plantations in the county. Camdless Bay would be one of the first to be visited. Hence the half-breed, in order to obtain more precise information, called at Mr. Stannard's house a little way out of the town.

This was a charming, comfortable dwelling, agreeably situated in a sort of green oasis which the clearing-axe had left in a corner of the plain. Under Alice's care the inside as well as the outside of the house was excellently looked after.

Zermah was received with great cordiality. At first Alice spoke to her about Gilbert's letter, and Zermah was able to tell her almost his very words.

"Yes," said Alice, "he is not far off now. But under

what circumstances will he come back to Florida? And what dangers may there not be for him before the expedition is over!"

"Dangers, Alice," said Mr. Stannard. "Do not be nervous. Gilbert faced greater when cruising off the coast of Georgia and in that Port Royal affair. I do not think Florida's resistance will be very terrible or very long. What can we do with this St. John's, which will let the gunboats into the very heart of the country? All defence seems to me difficult, if not impossible."

"May what you say be true," said Alice, "and may heaven grant that the war will soon be over!"

"It will only end by wiping out the South," replied Mr. Stannard. "That will take a long time, I am afraid; and Jefferson Davis and his Generals—Lee, Johnston, and Beauregard—will hold out for some time in the centre. The Federals will not have an easy triumph over the Confederates. But as to Florida, that can easily be captured; unfortunately its possession will not ensure the final victory."

"It is to be hoped that Gilbert will not be imprudent," said Alice, joining her hands. "If he yields to the wish to see his family for a few hours when he is so near them—"

"And seeing you, Miss Alice," said Zurmah, "for are you not already one of the family?"

"Yes, Zermah, in heart."

"No, Alice, there is nothing to be afraid of," said Mr. Stannard. "Gilbert is too sensible to run any risk when Commodore Dupont could occupy Florida in a few days; there would be no excuse for the foolhardiness of coming here until the Federals are masters."

"Particularly now that people are more than ever ready to break out into violence," answered Zermah.

"The town, this morning," said Mr. Stannard, "is in a very excited state. I saw who are the ringleaders, and I heard them. Texar is with them, and is urging them on and exciting them. The scoundrels will end by raising the lower classes not only against the magistrates, but against all who do not agree with them."

"Do you not think, Mr. Stannard," said Zermah, "that it would be better for you to leave Jacksonville—at all events for a short time. It would be wisest not to come back till after the coming of the Federal troops. Mr. Burbank told me to tell you that he would be glad to see you and Miss Alice at Castle House."

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Stannard. "I have not forgotten Mr. Burbank's offer. But is Castle House any safer than Jacksonville? If these adventurers become masters here, will they not spread over the country, and will the plantations escape their ravages?"

"Mr. Stannard," said Zermah, "it seems to me that if there is any danger it would be better to be together."

"Zermah is right, father. It would be better for us all to be at Camdless Bay."

"Certainly, Alice," said Mr. Stannard. "I am not going to refuse Burbank's invitation; but I don't think the danger is so pressing. Zermah can tell our friends that it will take me a few days more to put things in order, and then we will avail ourselves of the hospitality of Castle House."

"And when Mr. Gilbert arrives," said Zermah, "he will at least find there all he loves."

Leaving Mr. Stannard and his daughter, Zermah made her way through the crowd, which grew more and more excited, and regained the pier, where the overseer was waiting for her. They got into the boat, and Mr. Perry resumed the usual conversation at the very point he had left it.

In saying that the danger was not imminent Mr. Stannard was mistaken. Jacksonville was to have immediate experience of the effects of the war.

The Federal Government acted throughout with much circumspection; they proceeded step by step. Two years after the outbreak of hostilities, Abraham Lincoln had still to proclaim the abolition of slavery throughout the whole territory. Many months were still to elapse before the president's message proposed to solve the slave question by gradually buying out and emancipating the blacks,

before the vote was passed of 200,000*l.*, with the authority, by way of indemnity, to give 60*l.* for every slave freed. If some of the Northern generals had been authorized to suppress slavery in the counties invaded by their armies, they had, up to then, disavowed it. Opinions were not unanimous on the subject, and there were several Unionist chiefs reported to be against the measure, as being neither logical nor opportune.

Meanwhile the war dragged on, and much to the disadvantage of the Confederates. General Price, on the 13th of February, had had to evacuate Arkansas with his contingent of Missouri militia.

We have seen that Fort Henry was captured and occupied by the Federals. Now they were attacking Fort Donelson, which was defended by powerful artillery and covered by three miles of works, embracing the little town of Dover. Notwithstanding the cold and the snow, the fort, attacked on the land by the 15,000 men under General Grant and on the water by the gunboats of Commodore Foote, surrendered on the 14th of February, with an entire division of men and materials of war.

This was a serious check for the Confederates. The effect produced by the defeat was immense. As an immediate consequence came the retreat of General Johnston, who had to abandon the important town of Nashville on the Cumberland. The inhabitants were seized with panic, and left it as soon as he had gone, and a few days afterwards the same thing happened at Columbus. The whole State of Kentucky was thus in Federal hands.

We can easily imagine with what feelings of anger and ideas of revenge these events were received in Florida. The authorities were powerless to arrest the agitation, which spread to the most distant villages in the counties. The danger hourly increased for those who did not share in the opinions of the Southerners and join in the plans of resistance against the Federal troops. At Tallahassee and St. Augustine there were troubles which were easily put down; but at Jacksonville the rising of the populace threatened to degenerate into acts of unqualified violence.

The position at Camdless Bay became more and more disquieting. With his men so thoroughly devoted to him, James Burbank might perhaps hold out for a time, although it was then very difficult to procure arms and ammunition in sufficient quantities. At Jacksonville, Mr. Stannard was in great danger of losing his house, his daughter, and all he possessed. James Burbank knowing how he was placed, wrote him letter after letter. He sent many messengers asking him to come to Castle House without delay. There he would be in comparative safety, and if he had to find another retreat, if he had to take refuge in the interior until the Federals had quieted the country by their presence, it would be easier for him to do so.

Mr. Stannard at last resolved to leave Jacksonville and take refuge at Camdless Bay. He started on the morning of the 23rd, with as much secrecy as possible, and without informing any one of his plans. A boat waited for him at a little creek about a mile up the St. John's. Alice and he reached it in safety, crossed the river, and landed at the Camdless Bay pier, where the Burbanks were waiting for them.

It is easy to imagine their reception. Was not Alice already Mrs. Burbank's daughter? Now they were reunited. The dark days that were coming would be passed together in greater safety and less anxiety.

It was indeed time to leave Jacksonville. The next day Mr. Stannard's house was attacked by a lot of scoundrels, who marked their violence under a show of local patriotism. The authorities had great difficulty in saving the house from pillage, and in protecting some other houses belonging to honest citizens who did not share in the opinions of the mob. Evidently the hour was coming when the magistrates would be replaced by the chiefs of the rioters, who were doing their best to increase the excitement.

As Mr. Stannard had told Zermah, Texar had left his unknown retreat and was in Jacksonville among his habitual companions, who had been recruited from the very worst of the population, drawn from the plantations up the river. These scoundrels had resolved that they would have their

way in the towns as they had had it in the country. They corresponded with their adherents in the different counties of Florida, and by keeping the question of slavery well to the front, gained in numbers every day. In a short time at Jacksonville, as at St. Augustine, the vagabonds, adventurers, and backwoodsmen who had come crowding in, would become the masters and have the military and civil power in their hands. The militia and regular troops would hasten to make common cause with them, as has often happened in times of trouble when violence is the order of the day.

James Burbank was fully aware of what was passing. Many of his confidential agents, on whom he could depend, kept him informed of what was taking place at Jacksonville. He knew that Texar had reappeared there, and that his detestable influence had extended over the whole of the lower population which, like him, was of Spanish origin. Such a man at the head of affairs was a direct menace to Camdless Bay. And so Burbank was making ready for either resistance, if it were possible, or retreat if it became necessary to abandon Castle House to fire and pillage. Above all things to provide for the safety of his family and friends was his first and constant care.

During these days Zermah's devotion knew no bounds. At all hours she watched the boundaries of the plantation, particularly on the river side. A few slaves, chosen from among the most intelligent and best, lived day and night at posts which had been assigned to them. Any attempt against the estate would have been reported immediately. The Burbanks would not be taken unawares, without having time to take refuge in Castle House.

But James Burbank need not have been so anxious about a direct strong-handed attack. So long as the authority was not in the hands of Texar and his people there was no abandonment of official form. Under the pressure of public opinion the magistrates were brought to decide on a measure that would give a sort of satisfaction to the slavery partisans, who were so incensed against the North.

Burbank was the most important of the Florida planters, the richest of those who were known to hold liberal opinions. It was he who was first thought of to give an explanation of his personal ideas on enfranchisement in the midst of a slaveholding country.

In the evening of the 26th an orderly from Jacksonville arrived at Camdless Bay, and handed in a letter addressed to him. This is what the envelope contained:—

"Mr. James Burbank is ordered to present himself in person to-morrow, the 27th February, at eleven o'clock in the morning, at the Court of Justice before the authorities of Jacksonville."

That was all.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE THE COURT.

If this was not the clap of thunder, it was the lightning-flash that preceded it.

If James Burbank was not shaken by it, what were the feelings of his family? Why should the owner of Camdless Bay be summoned to Jacksonville? It was indeed a summons, not an invitation, to appear before the authorities. What were they going to do? Was this the beginning of some prosecution against him? Was it his liberty or his life that was in danger? If he obeyed—if he left Castle House—would they let him come back? If he did not obey, would they use force to bring him? And in that case to what dangers, to what violence, would his people be exposed?

"You shall not go, James."

It was Mrs. Burbank, who spoke in the name of all.

"No, Mr. Burbank," said Alice. "You must not think of leaving us—"

"To put yourself in the power of such people," added Carrol.

Burbank did not answer. When he first read the curt order to appear he had become so angry that he could scarcely restrain himself. What had happened to make the magistrates so daring? Had Texar's companions and partisans found their way into office? Had they procured the dismissal of the authorities who had hitherto acted with some moderation? No. Overseer Perry had returned in the afternoon from Jacksonville and brought no such news.

"Could it be some event of the war?" said Mr. Stan-

nard; "some advantage gained by the Southerners which has led them to attack us?"

"I am afraid that must be it," said Edward Carrol. "If the North has experienced some check, these scoundrels will fancy they are no more in danger from Commodore Dupont, and are capable of proceeding to any excess."

"They say that in Texas," said Mr. Stannard, "the Federal troops have had to retire before the militia, and re-cross the Rio Grande, after a severe defeat at Valverde. At least, that is what I was told by a Jacksonville man I met about an hour ago."

"Evidently that is what has made these fellows so bold," said Carrol.

"Then Sherman's army and Dupont's flotilla will not come!" exclaimed Mrs. Burbank.

"It is only the 26th of February," said Alice, "and, according to Gilbert's letter, the Federal ships will not be ready for sea before the 28th."

"Then you want the time to get down to the mouths of the St. John's," added Mr. Stannard, "to force the passes, clear the bar, and make a descent on Jacksonville. That will take ten days."

"Ten days?" said Alice.

"Ten days!" added Mrs. Burbank. "And before then what may not happen to us?"

James Burbank took no part in the conversation. He was thinking. He was asking himself what he was to do. To refuse to obey was to see the whole populace of Jacksonville advance on Camdless Bay with the open or tacit approval of the authorities. How great would then be the danger to his family! Better risk his own safety than theirs. If his life or liberty were in peril, better that the peril should threaten him alone.

Mrs. Burbank looked at her husband with the keenest anxiety. She felt that he was fighting a battle with himself. She hesitated to question him. Neither Alice, nor Stannard, nor Carrol dare ask him what his answer was to be. It was little Dy who, unconsciously, no doubt, made

herself the mouthpiece of the family. She had gone near her father, who took her on his knee.

"Father!" said she.

"What is it, dear?"

"Are you going to those wicked people who want to do you such harm?"

"Yes. I will go."

"James!" exclaimed Mrs. Burbank.

"I must; it is my duty. I will go!"

James Burbank had spoken so resolutely that it was useless to say anything against his determination. He had evidently thought over all the consequences. His wife went and sat beside him, and put her arms round him, but she said nothing. And what could she say?

"My friends," said Burbank, "it is possible that we are exaggerating the importance of this arbitrary act. What can they say against me? Nothing, as they know well. Accuse me of my opinions? My opinions are my own. I have never hidden them from my adversaries; and, as long as I live, I shall not hesitate to proclaim them to their face."

"We will go with you, James!" said Carrol.

"Yes," added Stannard. "We will not let you go to Jacksonville alone."

"No, my friends," answered Burbank. "To me alone comes the order to appear before the magistrates, and I alone will go. I may be kept there for some days. It is, therefore, better that you stay at Camdless Bay. To you I entrust my family during my absence."

"And you are really going?" said Dy.

"Yes, my little daughter," said Burbank playfully; "but if I do not lunch with you to-morrow I will come back to dinner, and we'll pass the evening together. Now, tell me if, while I am at Jacksonville, there is anything I can buy you? What can I do to please you? What shall I bring you?"

"Bring yourself, father," said the child; and at this expression of what all felt, the family separated, after Burbank had taken such measures of security as the occasion required.

The night passed without an alarm. In the morning Burbank was awake with the dawn, and was soon on his way down the avenue of bamboos leading to the pier. There he gave orders for a boat to be ready at eight o'clock to take him across the river.

As he returned to Castle House from the pier he was met by Zermah.

"Master," she said, "your mind is made up? You are going to Jacksonville?"

"Yes, Zermah, and in the interest of all. You understand, do you not?"

"Yes, master. A refusal on your part would bring Texar's mob on Camdless Bay."

"And that is a serious danger which must be avoided at all cost," said Burbank.

"Do you wish me to go with you?"

"On the contrary, I wish you to remain on the plantation. It is necessary that you should be near my wife, near my child, in case any danger should threaten them before my return."

"I will not leave them."

"You have no news?"

"No! It is true, however, that suspicious characters are prowling around the plantation. They have been watched. Last night two or three boats crossed the river. Do they think that Mr. Gilbert is with the Federals under Commodore Dupont, and is coming secretly to Camdless Bay?"

"My brave boy!" said Burbank. "No! he is too sensible to be so rash."

"I am afraid Texar has some suspicion on the subject. They tell me his influence gets greater every day. When you are at Jacksonville beware of Texar, master—"

"Yes, Zermah, as of a poisonous reptile! But I am on my guard. While I am away, if he makes any attempt against Castle House—"

"Never fear, master, for yourself; and never fear for us. Your slaves will defend the plantation, and, if necessary, will die to the last man. They are devoted to you. They

love you. I know what they think, what they say, what they will do. There have been people here from other plantations to raise them against you, but they will not listen to them. They are all one family with yours, and you can depend upon them."

"I know it, Zermah, and I trust to them."

Burbank returned to the house. The moment came; he bid farewell to his wife, his daughter, and Alice. He promised them to do nothing to provoke the magistrates to violence. He would be sure to come back that night. He bid everybody good-bye and left them. Certainly James Burbank had much to fear for himself; but there was much to be feared for those he left at Castle House.

Stannard and Carrol went with him to the landing-place at the end of the avenue. There he gave them his last instructions; and with a beautiful breeze from the south-west, the boat rapidly left the pier of Camdless Bay.

An hour afterwards, about ten o'clock, Burbank landed at Jacksonville. The quay was then deserted. There were only a few sailors discharging the cargoes of the dogger-boats. He was not recognized; his arrival was not announced at all, and he was able to cross to the end of the harbour and call on one of his friends, Mr. Harvey.

Mr. Harvey was much surprised and uneasy at seeing him. He had not thought that he would have obeyed the order to present himself at the court. In the town it was not thought that he would. As to who had been the cause of the order being given, Mr. Harvey did not know. Probably, with a view to satisfy public opinion, the magistrates were going to ask him to explain his conduct since the beginning of the war, particularly with regard to his slaves. Perhaps they were going to keep the richest Federal farmer in Florida as a hostage. Would it not have been better to have stopped at Camdless Bay? So thought Mr. Harvey. Could he not go back as nobody knew he had come?

Burbank had not come merely to go back again. He wished to know what it was all about, and he would know.

Some very interesting questions as to the state of affairs generally were then put by him to his correspondent.

Had the authorities been replaced by the ringleaders of the mob?

Not yet, but their position had become precarious.

Had the Spaniard Texar any hand in the popular movement that was about to take place?

Yes. He was looked upon as the leader of the advanced slave-holding party in Florida. He and his companions would probably soon be masters of the town.

Had the last news from the war been confirmed?

It had been. The organization of the Southern States had just been completed. On the 22nd of February the Government had been definitely formed, with Jefferson Davis as President and Stephens as Vice-President, and they had been invested with power for six years. Congress, composed of two houses, had assembled at Richmond. Jefferson Davis, three days before, had asked for compulsory service. Since then the Confederates had had a few successes of no great importance. On the 24th, an important detachment of McClellan's had crossed the Upper Potomac, and the Southerners had consequently evacuated Columbus. A great battle was imminent on the Mississippi between them and the army of General Grant.

And how about the squadron that Dupont was to bring to the mouths of the St. John's?

Rumours were afloat that in ten days it would attempt to force the passes. If Texar and his partisans were meditating an outbreak to get the town into their hands, no time was to be lost.

Such was the state of affairs at Jacksonville; and who could tell if the Burbank incident would not hasten the catastrophe?

When the time came for him to appear James Burbank left his friend's house and walked to the Courts of Justice. There was much excitement in the streets. The people were crowding towards the courts. It seemed as though the case, though it might be of little importance in itself,

would bring about a rising that might have deplorable consequences.

The square was full of people, mostly of the poorer whites, half-breeds, and negroes. Naturally they were noisy. If those who could obtain admission to the court were few, a good many of Texar's partisans would nevertheless be there. With them would be a sprinkling of law-abiding citizens opposed to such an act of injustice, but it would be difficult for them to withstand the party bent on removing the authorities of Jacksonville.

As soon as Burbank appeared in the square he was recognized. A loud shouting arose; and it was not in his favour. A few courageous citizens surrounded him, having no intention that an honourable and much-respected man should be exposed to the brutalities of the mob. In obeying the summons he had received Burbank had shown his dignity and decision of character, and his doing so was worthy of recognition. He was therefore able to make his way across the square. He reached the door of the court, entered, and stopped at the bar to which he had been so unjustly summoned.

The chief magistrate of the town and his assistants were already on the bench. They were moderate, reasonable men. The menaces and recriminations to which they had been subject ever since the outbreak of the war may be imagined. To remain at their posts required no little courage and energy. It was only because the slave question caused less excitement in Florida than in the other states of the South that they had been able to withstand the attacks of the turbulent party. Secessionist ideas were, however, making way; and with them the influence of the lower classes and adventurous vagabonds daily increased; and it was to satisfy public opinion, to a certain extent under the pressure of the more violent agitators, that the magistrates had decided to summon James Burbank, on information given by one of their leaders—the Spaniard Texar.

The murmur—of approbation from one side, of disapprobation from another—which greeted the proprietor of

Camdless Bay as he entered the court soon subsided. Erect, with the dauntless look of a man that had never failed, he did not even wait for the magistrate to ask him the usual questions, but in a firm voice he said,—

"You asked for James Burbank. James Burbank is before you."

After the first formalities, to which Burbank answered very briefly, he said, "Of what am I accused?"

"Of opposing by word, and probably by deed, such ideas and hopes as are now held by the majority in Florida."

"And who is my accuser?"

"I am."

It was Texar. Burbank recognized his voice. He did not even turn his head; he contented himself with shrugging his shoulders in token of his contempt for his accuser.

On the other hand, Texar's partisans encouraged their leader by voice and gesture.

"And in the first place," said he, "I tell James Burbank to his face that he is a Northerner! His presence at Jacksonville, in a Confederate State, is a standing insult. He is a Northerner at heart and by birth; why has he not gone back to the North?"

"I am in Florida," replied Burbank, "because it suits me to be there. I have lived in the county for twenty years. If I was not born in it you know at least where I came from; and that is more than you can say for those whose past is unknown, and who live not in the light of day, and whose private life ought to be inquired into much more than mine."

Although this was a direct attack on Texar, he made no sign.

"What next?" asked Burbank.

"Next," said the Spaniard, "when the country has risen for the maintenance of slavery, and is ready to shed its blood to repulse the Federal troops, I accuse James Burbank of being an anti-slavery man, and the head of an anti-slavery propaganda."

"James Burbank," said the magistrate, "in the circumstances in which we are placed, you will understand that this charge is of exceptional gravity. I shall be glad to have your answer."

"Sir," said Burbank, "my answer is very simple. I have assisted in no propaganda, nor do I intend doing so. The charge is false. As to my opinions on slavery, if I am permitted to refer to them here, I may say that I am an abolitionist! I deplore the strife that is raging between the South and the North. I am afraid that the South is marching to inevitable disaster, and it is in her own interest that I wish to see her on another road instead of engaging in a war against common sense. You will remember some day that those who spoke to you as I am speaking were in the right. When the time has come for a change, for a step in moral progress, it is foolish to withstand it. The separation of the North from the South would be a crime against the American country. Neither reason, nor justice, nor force is on your side, and the crime will never be accomplished."

These words were received with a few shouts of approval, speedily drowned in more noisy demonstrations. The majority were not prepared to accept them.

When the magistrate had obtained silence in the court James Burbank continued:—

"And now," said he, "I am ready for more precise charges, as to facts, be it understood, and I will reply to them when you tell me what they are."

The magistrates were much embarrassed by this dignified bearing. They knew of no fact that could be charged against Mr. Burbank. Their object had been to let the charges be made and let them be proved, if proofs existed.

Texar saw that he must explain in greater detail or he would fail.

"Be it so," said he. "But it is not my notion of what is best to invoke freedom of opinion on the slave question when the country has risen in support of the clause. But if James Burbank has the right to think as he likes on the subject—if it is true that he abstains from making converts

to his ideas, at least he might abstain from corresponding with the enemy at the gates of Florida."

This accusation of complicity with the Federals was a very serious one at that time, and hence the thrill of excitement that ran through the audience. It was, however, still vague, and had to be proved.

"You pretend that I correspond with the enemy?"

"Yes," said Texar.

"Prove it. I should like you to."

"Very well," said Texar. "About three weeks ago a messenger to James Burbank left the Federal army, or rather, the flotilla of Commodore Dupont. The man came to Camdless Bay, and he was followed from the time he left the plantation till he re-crossed the frontier. Do you deny that?"

Evidently this was the messenger who had brought the young lieutenant's letter. Texar's spies had not been deceived. This time the charge was definite, and Burbank's reply was anxiously waited for.

He did not hesitate to tell them what was only the truth.

"Yes," said he, "a man did come about that time to Camdless Bay, but the man was only a messenger. He did not belong to the Federal army, and he simply brought a letter from my son—"

"From your son," interrupted Texar; "from your son, who, if we are correctly informed, is in the Unionist service, who is, perhaps, in the van of the invaders now on the march to Florida."

The vehemence with which Texar pronounced these words made a strong impression on the people in the court. If James Burbank, after admitting that he had received a letter from his son, admitted that Gilbert was in the Federal army, how could he get over the charge of being in communication with the enemies of the South?

"Will you reply to the evidence against your son?" asked the magistrate.

"No, sir," replied Burbank, "I have nothing to say in the matter. There is no charge against my son that I know of. I alone am accused of holding communication

with the Federal army, and I deny it, and I defy this man who attacks me on account of his own personal hatred towards me to bring forward a single proof."

"He admits, then, that his son is now fighting against the Confederates!" exclaimed Texar.

"I admit nothing," said Burbank. "It is for you to prove the charge you bring against me."

"Good! I will prove it," replied Texar. "In a few days I shall be in possession of the proof you ask, and when I have it—"

"When you have it," replied the magistrate, "we can take it into consideration. Until then, I do not see what charges Mr. Burbank has to answer."

In deciding in this way the magistrate acted like an honest man. He was right undoubtedly; unfortunately he was wrong to be right with a public so prejudiced against the planter of Camdless Bay. And then followed an ominous murmuring, and even protesting, on the part of Texar's companions. The Spaniard saw how things were going, and abandoning the charges against Gilbert Burbank, returned to those against his father.

"Yes," he said, "I will prove all that I have advanced with regard to James Burbank's being in communication with the enemy preparing to invade Florida. Meanwhile, the opinions he publicly professes—opinions so dangerous for the cause of slavery—constitute a public danger; and, in the name of all the slaveholders who will not submit to the yoke of the North, I demand that he be secured."

"Yes! yes!" exclaimed the partisans of Texar, while some of the audience endeavoured in vain to protest against the unjustifiable proposal.

The magistrate succeeded in quieting the assembly, and then Burbank replied,—

"I shall do all that my strength and my rights allow me to oppose such tyranny. I am an abolitionist. And I have already told you so. But opinion is free, I suppose, in a system of government founded on freedom. Up to now it has not been a crime to be an anti-slavery man, and as I am not a criminal the law is powerless to punish me."

Renewed shouts of approval seemed to show that Burbank was getting the best of it. Texar saw that the time had come to change his batteries. We need not, therefore, be surprised when he hurled at Burbank the following unexpected challenge :—

"Well, if you do not believe in slavery, why do you not free your own slaves?"

"I will do so," answered James Burbank. "I will do so as soon as the time comes."

"Indeed! That means you will do so when the Federal army is in possession of Florida. You want Sherman's soldiers and Dupont's sailors to give you courage to act up to your ideas! That is prudent, but it is cowardly."

"Cowardly!" exclaimed Burbank indignantly, and not seeing the snare spread for him.

"Yes, cowardly," said Texar. "You dare not put your ideas into practice! You only want to curry popularity with the Northerners! You are an abolitionist only for appearance sake; at heart you are a slavery man."

James Burbank drew himself up. He gave his opponent a long look of scorn. Such hypocrisy was manifestly absurdly out of keeping with his frank, loyal existence. In a clear, decided tone, that could be heard by all, he said :—

"Inhabitants of Jacksonville, from this day forth I shall not keep a slave. This very day I proclaim the abolition of slavery over the whole plantation of Camdless Bay."

At first this bold declaration was greeted with cheers. It had required true courage to do such a thing—courage more than prudence perhaps. Burbank had allowed his indignation to get the better of him.

It was evident that his action would compromise the interests of the other Florida planters, and at once a reaction took place in the court. The applause was silenced by the vociferations not only of those who were slaveholders on principle, but of those who till then had been indifferent on the slavery question.

And Texar's friends would have profited by this reaction

to commit some act of violence on James Burbank if the Spaniard himself had not restrained them.

"Leave him alone," said he. "Burbank has disarmed himself. Now he is ours!"

His meaning was immediately understood, and his partisans refrained from any act of violence. He even felt no misgivings when the magistrates told Burbank he might go —there was no proof to warrant his incarceration. If the Spaniard could make good his words later on, and produce witnesses to show that Burbank was in communication with the enemy, the magistrates could take action. Until then Burbank was free.

True, the declaration of enfranchisement relative to Camdless Bay was made publicly, and might eventually serve as a pretence on the part of the mob for proceedings against the authorities of the town.

As he left the court Burbank was followed by a disorderly crowd very evilly disposed towards him, but the police kept them from assaulting him. There were shouts and threats, but no acts of violence. Evidently Texar's influence protected him.

He reached the quay, where his boat was waiting. There he took leave of his friend Mr. Harvey; and then, pushing off, he was soon out of range of the vociferations with which the rabble of Jacksonville saluted him as he left them.

As the tide was going down, the boat took at least two hours to get across to Camdless Bay, where the family were waiting for him. Great was their joy when they saw him coming back. Many reasons had they had for fearing he would be kept away from them.

"No," said he to little Dy as he kissed her; "I promised to come home to dinner, my dear, and you know I never break my promises."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST SLAVE.

THAT evening James Burbank told his people what had happened at the court. Texar's hateful conduct was revealed. It was at his instigation that the summons had been sent to Camdless Bay. The conduct of the magistrates had been worthy of praise. When the charge of communicating with the Federals had been made they had asked for the proof, and as the proof was not forthcoming Burbank was set at liberty.

With these vague charges Gilbert's name had been mixed up. There could not be much doubt that the young man was with the Northern army. Was not James Burbank's refusal a half-admission that the assertion was true? And consequently great was the fear and anxiety on the part of Mrs. Burbank, and Alice, and all the family. If the son could not be got at would not the rabble of Jacksonville take vengeance on his father? Texar had boasted that in a few days he would produce his proof; and it was not impossible that he could do so. What would have to be done then?

"Poor Gilbert," said Mrs. Burbank, "to know he is so near to Texar, who will stop at nothing to attain his end."

"Could we not let him know what is happening at Jacksonville?" asked Alice.

"Yes," said Mr. Stannard, "we might let him know that the slightest imprudence on his part will have the most deplorable consequences for his and him."

"And how are we to let him know?" asked James Burbank. "There are spies all round the plantation;

there can be no doubt of that. The messenger Gilbert sent was watched back to the frontier. Every letter we write may fall into Texar's hands. Every man we send with a verbal message may be arrested on the road. No, my friends, do not try to make matters worse. May heaven send the Federals into Florida without delay! It is time they came now; the minority of honest people is threatened by the scoundrels of the country."

James Burbank was right. Owing to the watch kept round the plantation it would be very imprudent to hold any communication with Gilbert. And the time was approaching when he and his people would be in safety under the protection of the Federal army.

In fact, it was the very next morning that Commodore Dupont was to start from his anchorage at Edisto. In three days his flotilla would have dropped down the Georgia coast and reached St. Andrew's Bay.

Then James Burbank told his friends of the very serious matter that had happened before the magistrates; how he had been led to reply to Texar's taunt as to the slaves at Camdless Bay. Strong in his right, strong in his conscience, he had publicly declared the abolition of slavery on his estate. This was what no Southern state had yet allowed to be proclaimed without having been obliged by the fortune of war. He had done it entirely of his own free will.

The declaration was as bold as it was magnanimous. What would be its consequences no one could foresee. Evidently it would not make Burbank's position less hazardous in this slave-holding country. It might, perhaps, provoke some desire of revolt among the slaves on other plantations. That did not matter! His friends, excited by the grandeur of the action, fully approved of what Burbank had done.

"James," said Mrs. Burbank, "whatever may happen, you did quite right to reply in that way to Texar's odious insinuations."

"We are proud of you, father!" said Alice, giving Mr. Burbank the name for the first time.

"And so, my dear girl," said James Burbank, "when Gilbert and his Federals enter Florida they will not find a single slave at Camdless Bay."

"Thank you, Mr. Burbank," said Zermah. "I thank you for my companions and myself. As far as I am concerned I never felt I was a slave. Your kindness and generosity have always made me seem like as free as I am to-day."

"Quite so, Zermah," said Mrs. Burbank. "Slave or free, we shall love you none the less."

Zermah vainly tried to hide her emotion. She took Dy in her arms and clasped her to her bosom.

Carrol and Stannard cordially shook hands with Burbank to show how they applauded his deed of daring—and justice.

Evidently the Burbank family in their generous enthusiasm forgot all about the complications to which the act might give rise.

No one at Camdless Bay would think of blaming James Burbank, unless perhaps Mr. Perry, the overseer, when he heard what had taken place. But he was away on duty and would not be back till late at night.

When the family gathering broke up, Mr. Burbank told them that next morning he would give the slaves their liberty.

"We will be with you, James," said Mrs. Burbank, "when you tell them they are free."

"Yes, so will all of us," said Carrol.

"And me, too!" said little Dy.

"Yes, my dear; you too."

"Zermah," said the little girl, "are you going to leave us now?"

"No, my child!" said Zermah. "No, I will never leave you!"

In the morning, the first person Mr. Burbank met in the private garden was Perry the overseer. As the secret had been kept, he had heard nothing about it. He soon heard it from the lips of his master—much to his amazement.

"Oh, Mr. James! oh, Mr. James!"

The worthy man was quite astounded, and other words failed him.

"But that ought not to surprise you, Perry," said Burbank. "I am only anticipating matters. You know that the enfranchisement of the blacks is an act imposed on every State that is careful of its dignity."

"Its dignity, Mr. James! What sort of a thing is this dignity?"

"You do not understand the word 'dignity,' Perry? Well, careful of its interests."

"Its interests—its interests, Mr. James! You say careful of its interests!"

"Certainly, and the future will show you I am right."

"But where are we to get the labour for the plantation, Mr. Burbank?"

"Amongst the blacks, Perry."

"But if the blacks are free not to work they will not work."

"They will work; and, what is more, work with more zeal and more pleasure, for their condition will be better."

"But your blacks, Mr. James! Your blacks will begin by leaving you."

"I shall be much astonished if a single one does anything of the sort."

"But I am no longer overseer of the slaves at Camdless Bay."

"No, but you are overseer at Camdless Bay; and I do not suppose your position will be any the worse for commanding free men instead of slaves."

"But—"

"My dear Perry, I warn you that I have an answer for all your buts. Look after what you have to do regarding a measure which you cannot prevent, and of which all my family approve."

"And do the blacks know nothing about it?"

"Not yet," said Burbank; "and do not say anything about it to them. They shall be told it to-day. You can assemble them in the park at three o'clock this afternoon, and tell them I have a communication to make to them."

Then the overseer retired with many a gesture of astonishment.

"Blacks who are not slaves! Blacks who will work for themselves! Blacks who will have to look after their own wants! It is a regular capsize of the social order! It is the upsetting of all human law! It is against nature—yes, against nature!"

During the morning Burbank, Stannard, and Carrol went out in the break to visit the northern boundary of the plantation. The slaves were busy at their usual work in the fields of rice and coffee-shrubs and sugar-canes. There was the same bustle going on in the workshops and saw-mills. The secret had been well kept. No communication had been established between Jacksonville and Camdless Bay. These who were so directly interested knew nothing of James Burbank's project.

In driving along the boundary of the estate Burbank and his friends wished to assure themselves that the neighbourhood of the plantation presented nothing suspicious. After yesterday's declaration, it was to be feared that some of the Jacksonville mob or the people of the country round might find their way to Camdless Bay. But nothing of the sort was to be seen. No prowlers were noticed even on the bank of the river or along the St. John's. The *Shannon*, which passed at ten o'clock, did not stop at the pier, but continued her voyage to Picolata. Neither up stream nor down stream was there anything to alarm the inhabitants of Castle House.

A little before noon Burbank, Stannard, and Carrol repassed the bridge into the enclosure and entered the house. The family were waiting for lunch. They seemed less anxious, and talked more at their ease. It seemed as though the course of events had paused for a while. Probably the energy of the Jacksonville magistrates had put a check on the violent spirits of Texar's party. If that state of things continued for a day or so, Florida would be occupied by the Federal army, and anti-slavery men, whether Northerners or Southerners, would be in safety.

James Burbank could thus proceed to the ceremony of

emancipation—the first action of the kind that had ever voluntarily taken place in a slave State.

Of all the blacks on the plantation, the one who would be most gratified was evidently a fellow of about twenty, whose name was Pygmalion, or Pyg, as he was more commonly called. He looked after the servants' quarters at Castle House, and so lived there. He did not work in the fields, nor in the factories, nor in the shops. Truth to tell, Pygmalion was a ridiculous, vain, idle fellow, whose faults his master very kindly overlooked. Since the slave question had come up, he had been heard to declaim in sounding phrases about human liberty. On all occasions he indulged in pretentious speeches to his fellow negroes, and was generally laughed down. As they said, he tried to ride the great horse when even a donkey would have thrown him. Many discussions had he had with Mr. Perry when the overseer was in a humour to listen to him; and we can imagine the enthusiasm with which he would welcome an act of enfranchisement that gave him the dignity of manhood.

The negroes had been told to assemble in the private park in front of Castle House, as an important communication was to be made to them by the planter.

A little before three o'clock—the time fixed for the meeting—the slaves began to assemble. They had not gone to work after the midday meal; and had tidied themselves up and changed their working clothes as was usual with them when admitted within the palisades. At the barracoons there had been great excitement, and the overseer had walked from one to the other growling to himself,—

"When I think that at this moment we can buy and sell these fellows as if they were merchandise, and in another hour we shall be able to do nothing of the sort! Yes! I will say so to the last! Mr. Burbank, you can do what you like and say what you like, and so can President Lincoln, and so can all the Federals of the North, and all the Liberals of the world!"

And here Pygmalion, who knew nothing as yet, found himself face to face with the overseer.

"Why are we to be called together, please, Mr. Perry?" asked he. "Do you know?"

"Yes, idiot! It is to—"

The overseer stopped, not wishing to betray the secret. An idea occurred to him.

"Come here, Pyg," he said.

Pygmalion approached.

"Have I ever pulled your ear for you, my boy?"

"Yes, Mr. Perry, for contrary to all justice—human or divine—you have a right to do so."

"Well, as it is my right I am going to use it once more!"

And without heeding the cries of Pyg, but without doing him any serious hurt, he pulled the ears which were already of tolerable length. And much did it relieve the overseer to take advantage of his right for the last time.

At three o'clock James Burbank and his people appeared on the terrace at Castle House. Before them stood seven hundred slaves, men, women, and children, among them a score of old negroes, who, when they were past work, found a comfortable retreat for old age in the Camdless Bay barracoons.

Deep silence fell on all. At a gesture from Mr. Burbank the overseer made the negroes form up closer, so that they could distinctly hear what was said to them.

"My friends," said James Burbank, "you know that a civil war has been raging for a long time in the United States. The real cause of that war is the question of slavery. The South is only fighting for slavery, in which it thinks its interests are bound up and which it wishes to maintain. The North, in the name of humanity, desires to put an end to it in America. God has helped the defenders of a righteous cause, and victory has already more than once declared for those who are fighting for the freedom of a race. For some time, as everybody knows, I have shared in the opinions of the North without being able to put them in practice. But now, certain things have happened, and I can lose no time in acting up to my ideas. Listen, then, to what I have to tell you in the name of all my family."

There was a subdued murmur of emotion in the crowd, but it died away almost instantly, and then James Burbank, in a voice that could be heard by all, made the following declaration :—

"From this 28th of February, 1862, henceforth the slaves on this plantation are free. They can leave here or stay here as they please. There are now none but free men at Camdless Bay."

The first greeting from those who had thus ceased to be slaves was a loud cheering. Arms were lifted in sign of thankfulness. The name of Burbank was shouted again and again. The crowd rushed to the terrace. Men, women, and children wished to kiss the hands of their liberator. The enthusiasm was indescribable, and it was all the more vigorous from being unprepared. As to Pygmalion we can imagine how he gesticulated and perorated and attitudinized.

Then an old negro, the oldest on the plantation, advanced to the steps of the terrace. Then he lifted his head, and, speaking with much emotion said,—

"In the name of the old slaves of Camdless Bay, who are now free, I thank you, Mr. Burbank, for having let us hear the first words of freedom ever spoken in the State of Florida."

As he spoke the old negro slowly mounted the steps, and kissed James Burbank's hands ; and then, as little Dy stretched out her arms to him, he lifted her up and held her out to his comrades.

"Hurray ! Hurray for Mr. Burbank !"

The joyous shouts again rent the air, loud enough to carry to Jacksonville, on the other bank of the St. John's, the news of the great deed that had been done.

The family were deeply moved. In vain did they try to quiet these shouts of enthusiasm. It was Zermah who succeeded in procuring silence as she advanced to the edge of the terrace to speak.

"My friends," said she, "we are now free ; thanks to the generosity, to the humanity of him who was our master, the best of masters !"

"Yes! yes!" shouted hundreds of voices in one great shout of gratitude.

"We can now go where we please. We can, if we like, avail ourselves of our liberty to leave the plantation. As for me I will follow the instinct of my heart; and I am sure that most of you will do as I do. For six years I have lived at Camdless Bay. My husband and I have lived here and we wish to die here. I ask Mr. Burbank to keep us now we are free as he kept us when we were slaves. Those who wish him to do so—"

"All! all!"

And the words repeated a thousand times showed how much the master of Camdless Bay was appreciated, and proved the bond of friendship and gratitude that united all on the estate.

James Burbank then spoke. He told all those who wished to remain on the plantation that they might do so under new conditions; all that was to be done was to agree what price should be paid for their labour. It was necessary that the matter should be finished in due form, and consequently each of the negroes would now receive a certificate of liberation.

To issue these was the duty of the assistant overseers. Ever since Mr. Burbank had decided to free his slaves he had had these papers prepared, and as negro after negro came up to receive them, most affecting were the demonstrations of gratitude.

The end of the day was devoted to rejoicing. In the morning the blacks would return to their ordinary work, but to-day must be given over to festivity. The Burbanks, as they walked among the crowd, were greeted with tokens of the sincerest friendship and assurances of boundless devotion.

But among the crowd overseer Perry moved like a lost soul.

"Well, Perry," asked Mr. Burbank, "what say you?"

"I say, Mr. James, that although they are free, these Africans are none the less Africans and have not changed their colour. They were born black and they will die black."

"But they will live white," said Burbank with a smile, "and that is everything!"

That evening the dinner at Castle House was a happy one; and more confidence was felt as to the future. In a few days the security of Florida would be completely assured. No bad news had come from Jacksonville. It was possible that James Burbank's conduct before the magistrates had had a favourable impression on the majority of the inhabitants.

One of the company at dinner was Mr. Overseer Perry, who had been obliged to help in what he could not hinder. He sat down opposite the old negro who had been invited by Mr. Burbank, in order to show that the freedom given him was not an empty declaration. Outside were heard the sounds of the holiday-making; and the park was illuminated by the reflection of the bonfires lighted in different parts of the plantation. In the middle of dinner a deputation arrived with a magnificent bouquet for the little girl, the finest, certainly, that "Miss Dy Burbank of Castle House" had ever received.

When all had gone, the family went back into the hall, to stay there till bedtime. It seemed as if a day so well begun could not but end as well. About eight o'clock the plantation was quiet. It seemed as though nothing would occur to trouble it, when a voice was heard without.

James Burbank rose and went to the front door.

In front of the terrace a few men were standing and talking in a loud tone.

"What is the matter?" asked James Burbank.

"Mr. Burbank," said one of the overseers, "a boat has just run alongside the pier."

"Where from?"

"The left bank."

"Who is on board?"

"A messenger sent to you from the Jacksonville magistrates."

"And what does he want?"

"He has a letter for you. Shall I let him land?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Burbank came to her husband's side, Alice stepped up to one of the windows, while Stannard and Carrol walked to the door. Zermah, taking little Dy by the hand, stood up. All felt that some serious incident was at hand.

The overseer went back to the landing-place. Ten minutes afterwards he returned with the messenger whom the boat had brought from Jacksonville.

He was in the uniform of the County Militia. He was introduced into the hall, and asked for Mr. Burbank.

"I am James Burbank. What is your business?"

"To hand you this letter."

The messenger held out a large envelope which bore the seal of the court.

Burbank broke the seal, and read,—

"By order of the authorities newly constituted at Jacksonville, every slave set free without the permission of the Confederate Government will be immediately expelled the territory.

"The expulsion to take place within the following forty-eight hours; and, in case of refusal, force will be used.

"TEXAR.

"Done at Jacksonville, 28th February, 1862."

The magistrates had been superseded. Texar had been placed by his partisans in charge of the town.

"What answer shall I take back?" asked the messenger.

"None!" said James Burbank.

The messenger retired, and was escorted back to the boat, which put off towards the other side of the stream.

And so, at the Spaniard's orders, the old slaves of the plantation were to be dispersed! Although they were free men, they were no longer free to live in Florida! Camdless Bay was to be deprived of all the men on whom he had reckoned to defend the plantation.

"Free on those conditions?" said Zermah. "Never! I refuse such freedom! And if I cannot remain near you I would rather be a slave."

And, taking her certificate of freedom in her hands, Zermah tore it across, and fell at James Burbank's feet.

CHAPTER IX.

WAITING.

SUCH were the first consequences of the generous action of freeing his slaves before the Federals were masters of the territory.

Texar and his partisans were now in power, and could indulge in any deed of violence that their brutal natures suggested. By his vague denunciations the Spaniard had not been able to put James Burbank in prison, but he had gained his end none the less by taking advantage of the excitement of the people at the conduct of the magistrates. After the acquittal of the anti-slavery planter, who was going to proclaim emancipation on the estate, Texar had raised a crowd of malcontents and headed a revolution in the town. He had superseded the old magistrates by the most advanced members of his party, formed a committee of small whites and Floridans of Spanish origin, and assured himself of the co-operation of the militia, with whom he had been in treaty for a long time, and who at once fraternized with the people. The fate of every person in the county was now in his hands.

James Burbank's conduct had not been approved by the majority of the planters on the banks of the St. John's, who feared that their own slaves would compel them to follow his example. Most of them being ardent Southerners, pledged to withstand the pretensions of the Unionists, saw with extreme irritation the advance of the Federal armies, and declared that Florida should resist them as the other Southern States were resisting them. At the outset of the war they had treated the question of enfranchisement with indifference, but they had hastened to range themselves

under the flag of Jefferson Davis, and to do their utmost to second the efforts of the rebels against the Government of Abraham Lincoln.

Under such circumstances there was little wonder that Texar, having the same opinions and interests to defend, should have succeeded as he had done, notwithstanding his evil reputation. He had seized his post, however, not so much to organize resistance and repulse Commodore Dupont's flotilla as to gratify his evil instincts; and that is why, on account of the hatred he bore towards the Burbank family, his first care had been to reply to the liberation at Camdless Bay by the edict which obliged the slaves who had been freed to leave the territory in forty-eight hours.

"In acting thus," he said, "I protect the interests of the planters. They cannot but approve of a measure which will prevent the rising of the slaves in Florida."

The majority had thus applauded without reservation this order of Texar's, arbitrary though it was. It was arbitrary, unique, and indefensible. In freeing his slaves, James Burbank was only acting within his right which he had always possessed. He could have done it before the war had divided the United States on the question of slavery. Nothing had occurred to supersede this right, and Texar's action was neither just nor legal.

But Camdless Bay would be deprived of its natural defenders, and Texar's object would be attained.

This was well understood at Castle House; and it would perhaps have been better if James Burbank had waited till he could act without danger. But, as we know, he had been charged before the Jacksonville magistrates with acting contrary to his opinions, and so placed that he must conform to them; and, incapable of mastering his indignation, he had declared himself publicly, and had publicly proceeded before the people of his plantation to give his slaves their freedom. By doing so he had injured his own position and that of his guests, and now it must be decided in all haste what was to be done.

In the first place—and this very evening the discussion was entered upon—could they go back on this act of

emancipation? No. That would make no difference in the state of affairs. Texar would not recognize such a tardy going back. Besides, the negroes, when they learnt what the Jacksonville authorities had decided to do, would unanimously imitate Zermah's example. Rather than leave Camdless Bay and be hunted from the State, they would return to their condition as slaves until the time when they would have the right to be free and live freely where they pleased.

But what would be the good of this? They would, under their old master, defend the plantation which had become their home, and with all the more ardour now they had been freed. This Zermah guaranteed. James Burbank therefore decided that he would not recall what he had done. All the rest were of his opinion.

And they were not mistaken. In the morning, when the new decree of the Jacksonville Committee was known, marks of devotion and tokens of fidelity came in from all sides. If Texar attempted to put his edict in force they would resist it. If he used force, they would use force to repel him.

"And, besides," said Carrol, "events are hurrying on. In a couple of days, in twenty-four hours perhaps, the slave question in Florida will be settled. To-morrow the Federal flotilla may force the mouths of the St. John's, and then—"

"And if the militia, aided by the Confederate troops, make any resistance?" asked Mr. Stannard.

"If they resist, their resistance will not last long," said Carrol. "Without ships or gunners, how can they oppose the passage of Commodore Dupont, the landing of Sherman, the occupation of the ports of Fernandina, Jacksonville, and St. Augustine? When these points are occupied, the Federals will be masters of Florida. Then Texar and his friends will have to run."

"If they could only catch him," said James Burbank, "then we should see if, when he is in the hands of Federal justice, he could substantiate some alibi to escape the punishment he deserves."

The night passed without the security of Castle House

being disturbed. In the morning the rumours that were flying about were inquired into. The plantation was not threatened that day. Texar's decree had ordered the expulsion of the blacks in forty-eight hours. James Burbank had determined to resist the order, and occupied the time in preparing for the defence of his house.

It was, however, important to get at all the reports from the theatre of war. Any moment the state of affairs might be changed; and James Burbank and his brother-in-law set off on horseback to learn what they could. Descending the right bank of the St. John's, they rode towards the mouth of the river, so as to explore for a dozen miles the widening of the river, which ends at San Pablo, where the lighthouse stands. As they passed Jacksonville they would be able to see if there was any gathering of boats indicating an approaching attack on Camdless Bay. In half an hour they had passed the boundary of the plantation.

Meanwhile Mrs. Burbank and Alice were walking in the park of Castle House. In vain Mr. Stannard tried to calm their apprehensions. They both had a presentiment of a coming catastrophe.

Zermah had been among the barracoons. Although the threat of expulsion was known, the blacks heeded it not. They had returned to their usual work. Like their old master, they had made up their minds to resist. If they were free, by what right were they to be expelled from the country of their adoption? Nothing could be more satisfactory than Zermah's report—the blacks of Camdless Bay could be trusted.

"Yes," said she, "my companions will all return to slavery, as I have done, rather than leave their master! And if they are obliged, they will defend their rights."

Nothing more was to be done than to wait for the return of James Burbank and Edward Carrol.

At this date, the 1st of March, it was not impossible that the Federal flotilla had arrived in sight of Pablo lighthouse, ready to occupy the mouth of the St. John's. The Confederates had not too many militia to oppose their

passage, and the authorities of Jacksonville would have none to spare to carry out their threats against the former slaves of Camdless Bay.

Mr. Perry made his daily visit to the different workshops and storehouses on the estate. He also could bear witness to the good disposition of the negroes. Although he did not care to admit it, he saw that if they had changed their condition, their assiduity at their work and devotion to the Burbank family had not changed. To resist all that the Jacksonville populace attempted against them they were firmly resolved. But, in Mr. Perry's opinion, these fine feelings would not last. Nature would reclaim her rights. After tasting independence, these enfranchised negroes would return to slavery, and descend to the place that Nature intended for them, between the man and the animal.

As he was thinking of these things, who should he run against but the conceited Pygmalion, strutting like a peacock with his head on high, his hands behind his back, and evidently thinking very much of himself as a free man. One thing was certain, and that was that he was not doing much work.

"Good morning, Mr. Perry!" said he superbly.

"What are you doing, Mr. Idle?"

"I am taking a walk! Have I not the right to do nothing now I am no longer a vile slave, and have the certificate of liberation in my pocket?"

"And who is to feed you, Pyg?"

"I am, Mr. Perry."

"And how?"

"By eating."

"And who is to give you what you eat?"

"My master."

"Your master! Have you forgotten that now you have no master, noodle?"

"No. I had one, and I shall have one; and Mr. Burbank will not send me away from the plantation, where, I can say without boasting, I am of some use."

"But he will send you away?"

"Will he?"

"Certainly. When you belonged to him he could keep you to do nothing. But now you do not belong to him he will show you the door if you do not work, and we shall see what you will do with your liberty, poor lunatic!"

Evidently Pyg had not studied the question from that point of view.

"What, Mr. Perry? Do you think Mr. Burbank would be so cruel—"

"It is not cruel; it is only logical. Besides, whether Mr. James wishes it or no, there is a decree of the Committee at Jacksonville ordering every freed slave out of Florida."

"Then that is true, then?"

"Quite true; and we shall now see how you and your companions will get out of the difficulty now you have lost your master."

"I am not going to leave Camdless Bay even if I am free."

"You are free to go, but not free to stop! You had better pack up."

"And what's to become of me?"

"That is your business."

"But if I am free," said Pygmalion, returning again to that point, "If I am free—"

"That is not enough, it seems!"

"Tell me what I ought to do, Mr. Perry."

"What you ought to do? Well; listen, and follow me, if you can."

"I follow."

"You are free, are you not?"

"Yes, and I have got the certificate in my pocket."

"Well; tear it up."

"Never."

"Then there is only one way I can see for you to stop here."

"What is that?"

"Change your colour, Pyg! When you are white you can live at Camdless Bay; till then you cannot."

The overseer, chuckling at having given Pyg's vanity such a lesson, turned on his heel.

Pyg remained deep in thought. He saw that to be no longer a slave was not enough to keep him his place. He must be white? And how could he become white, when Nature had made him black as ebony? And as he returned to Castle House he scratched his head as if he were tearing the hair from the skin.

A little before noon James Burbank and Edward Carrol returned to Castle House. They had seen nothing alarming at Jacksonville. The boats were in their usual place, some moored to the pier, others anchored out in the stream. A few detachments of Confederates had been seen on the left bank of the river, marching towards the north towards Nassau county. Nothing seemed to threaten Camdless Bay.

When they reached the end of the estuary, Burbank and his companion had looked out over the open sea. There was not a sail in sight. Not a cloud of smoke from some steamer could be traced on the horizon to indicate the presence or approach of a squadron. Preparations for defence there were none. There were no batteries, no earthworks. If the Federal ships appeared either at Nassau Creek or at the mouth of the St. John's, there was nothing to stop them. Only Pablo lighthouse was dismantled; the lantern was unshipped; and the passes were thus unlighted. But that would only prevent the entrance of a flotilla during the night.

Such was the report they brought back with them. There seemed to be nothing doing at Jacksonville to indicate an approaching attack on Camdless Bay.

"That is well," said Mr. Stannard, "but it is unsatisfactory that Dupont's ships are not yet in sight; there is a delay there that I cannot understand!"

"Yes," said Carrol; "if the fleet sailed the day before yesterday from St. Andrew's Bay, it ought now to be off Fernandina."

"It has been very bad weather during these last two or three days," said James Burbank. "It is possible that with these westerly winds Dupont has had to go out to sea.

The wind went down this morning, and I should not be surprised if this very night—"

"May heaven listen to you, my dear James," said Mrs. Burbank, "and come to our help."

"If Pablo lighthouse," said Alice, "is not lighted, how could the flotilla get into the St. John's to-night?"

"It would be impossible for them to get into the St. John's," said Burbank. "But before attacking the mouths of the river the Federals would have to capture Amelia Island and then Fernandina, so as to command the railway to Cedar Keys. I do not expect Dupont's vessels up the St. John's for three or four days."

"That is so, James," said Carrol. "But I hope the capture of Fernandina would force the Confederates to retreat. The militia might even abandon Jacksonville before the arrival of the gunboats. Then Camdless Bay would no longer be threatened by Texar and his accomplices—"

"That is possible," said James Burbank. "Once the Federals set foot in Florida, our safety will be, to a certain extent, secured. Is there any news on the plantation?"

"None," said Alice. "I heard from Zermah that the blacks had gone to work as usual, and that they are ready to fight to the last in defence of Camdless Bay."

"Let us hope we shall not have to put their devotion to the proof! I shall not be at all surprised if the scoundrels who have got the upper hand at Jacksonville take themselves off as soon as the Federal fleet is signalled. But we must be on our guard. After lunch, Stannard, come with Carrol and me over to the most exposed part of the estate. I do not want you and Alice to be in as much danger here as at Jacksonville. In truth, I shall never forgive myself for bringing you here, if things turn out badly."

"My dear James," said Stannard, "if we had stayed in our house at Jacksonville we should have been exposed to the exactions of the authorities, like all the rest who hold anti-slavery opinions."

"In any case, Mr. Burbank," said Alice, "even if the danger is greater here, is it not better for us to share it with you?"

"Yes, my dear girl," said James Burbank. "Come on! I hope and think that Texar will not have time to put his scheme against our men into execution."

During the afternoon Burbank and his friends visited the barracoons with Mr. Perry. They could see for themselves that the feeling among the blacks was excellent. Burbank called the overseer's attention to the zeal with which the newly freed negroes had returned to work. Not one was absent from his post.

"Yes, yes!" answered Perry. "But we have to see how the work will turn out in the end."

"But they did not change their arms when they changed their condition, did they?"

"Not yet; but you will soon see that they have not the same hands at the end of the arms."

"Well, Perry," replied Burbank gaily, "their hands will always have five fingers, I imagine; and we cannot expect them to have more."

As soon as the round had been made, Mr. Burbank and his friends returned to Castle House. The evening passed as quietly as the last. In the absence of all news from Jacksonville there seemed to be ground for hope that Texar had given up his threat, or that he had no time to execute it.

Careful precautions were, however, taken during the night. Perry and the assistant overseers stationed sentries round the estate, and particularly watched the banks of the river. The blacks had been cautioned to retreat on the palisades in case of an alarm, and a sentry was on guard at the gate.

Many times did James Burbank and his friends go out to see that their orders had been attended to. When the sun rose nothing had happened. The night had passed without incident.

CHAPTER X.

THE MORNING OF THE 2ND OF MARCH.

NEXT day, March 2nd, James Burbank had news by one of his assistant overseers, who had crossed the river and returned to Jacksonville without awaking suspicion.

The news was undoubtedly correct and it was important.

Commodore Dupont had anchored at daybreak in St. Andrew's Bay, on the coast of Georgia. The *Wabash*, on which he had hoisted his flag, was at the head of a squadron of twenty-six vessels, of which eighteen were gunboats, one a cutter, one an armed transport, and six were ordinary transports with General Wright's brigade on board. And, as Gilbert had said in his last letter, General Sherman accompanied the expedition.

Commodore Dupont, whom the bad weather had kept back, had at once set to work to take possession of the passes of the St. Mary's. These channels, difficult enough of access, open off the mouth of the river of the same name to the north of Amelia Island on the frontier of Georgia and Florida.

Fernandina, the principal position of the island, was protected by Fort Clinch with a garrison of fifteen hundred men behind its thick stone walls. Would the Southerners hold out against the Federals in this fortress, wherein they might make a lengthened defence? It would be thought so.

Nothing of the kind was done. According to the assistant-overseer's report, a rumour had reached Jacksonville that the Confederates had evacuated Fort Clinch as

soon as the squadron appeared in St. Mary's Bay; and not only had they abandoned Fort Clinch, but they had cleared out of Fernandina, Cumberland Island, and all that part of the Florida coast.

This was all the news that reached Castle House, but there is no need to dwell on its importance with regard to the position at Camdless Bay. Now that the Federals had at last landed in Florida, the whole State would soon be in their power. Obviously a few days would elapse before the gunboats crossed the bar of the St. John's. But their presence would have its effect on the new authorities of Jacksonville, and there was room to hope that, in fear of reprisals, Texar and his supporters would not dare to take action against the plantation of so prominent a Northerner as James Burbank.

This was reassuring for the family, whose fear was suddenly changed to hope. And Alice Stannard and Mrs. Burbank ceased to tremble for Gilbert's safety, with the certainty that he was not far off and the assurance that he would soon return. The young lieutenant at St. Andrew's was within thirty miles of Camdless Bay. He was on board the gunboat *Ottawa*, which had just been distinguished by a feat of arms unexampled in naval annals.

What had happened on the morning of the 2nd of March was this. The assistant-overseer had not ascertained these details during his visit to Jacksonville, but it is important that they should be known on account of the events that followed.

As soon as Commodore Dupont discovered that Fort Clinch had been evacuated by the Confederate garrison, he sent a few vessels of light draught across St. Mary's Channel. Already the white population had retired into the interior of the country with the Southern troops, abandoning the towns, villages, and plantations on the coast. There was a regular panic due to the fear of the reprisals which, the Secessionists falsely stated, were intended by the Federal chief. Not only in Florida, but along the Georgian frontier, along the whole extent of country

between the bays of Ossabaw and St. Mary's, the people beat a precipitate retreat so as to escape from the troops landed by General Wright. Under these circumstances, Commodore Dupont did not have to fire a shot to get possession of Fort Clinch and Fernandina. The gunboat *Ottawa*, on which was Gilbert, accompanied by Mars, acted as second, and had to use its guns in the manner following.

The town of Fernandina is connected with the west coast of Florida on the Gulf of Mexico by a branch railway which runs to Cedar Keys. The railway runs along the coast of Amelia Island; then before it reaches the mainland it crosses Nassau Creek on a long bridge of piles.

When the *Ottawa* reached the centre of the creek a train was on the bridge. The garrison of Fernandina was in flight, taking its provisions with it, and followed by many of the more or less important people of the town. Immediately the gunboat started at full speed towards the bridge and fired her bow-chasers at the piles and the train. Gilbert was in charge of the firing, and many good shots were made; among them a shell struck the last carriage of the train and broke the axle and the coupling. The train did not stop for an instant—to do so would have been dangerous—and leaving the carriage to look after itself, steamed off full speed to the south-west. A detachment of Federal troops landed at Fernandina appeared at this moment, and rushed on to the bridge. The carriage was captured with the fugitives it contained, who were chiefly civilians. The prisoners were taken to the superior officer, Colonel Gardner, in command at Fernandina, who took their names, kept them for twenty-four hours on one of the vessels of the squadron, as an example, and then released them.

When the train had run out of sight, the *Ottawa* went off to attack and seize a vessel laden with war material, which had taken refuge in the bay. These events were calculated to spread discouragement among the Confederate troops and the people of the Floridan towns; and this was particularly the case at Jacksonville. The estuary

of the St. John's would be forced as easily as had been that of the St. Mary's; that was very evident, and probably the Unionists would meet with no more resistance at Jacksonville than at St. Augustine and the other coast towns.

This was good news for James Burbank. He might well believe that Texar dared not now give effect to his plans. He and his partisans would be superseded, and in due course the honest folks would resume the power of which an outbreak of the mob had deprived them.

There was every reason to think in this way and to hope; and as soon as the staff at Camdless Bay heard the important news, which was soon known at Jacksonville, their joy showed itself in noisy cheering, in which Pygmalion took a prominent part. Nevertheless, it would not do to abandon the precautions which had been taken to secure the safety of the estate, at least until the gunboats appeared in the river.

Unfortunately—and this James Burbank could neither imagine nor suppose—a whole week was to elapse before the Federals were ready to enter the St. John's. And during that time what dangers were to threaten Camdless Bay!

Commodore Dupont's plan was to show the Federal flag at every point where vessels could go. He split up his squadron into detachments. One gunboat was sent up the St. Mary's River to occupy the little town of that name, and advance some sixty miles up the country. To the south were sent three other gunboats, commanded by Captain Godon, to explore the bays, seize Jekyll and St. Simon's islands, and take possession of the small towns of Brunswick and Darien, which had been partly abandoned by their inhabitants. Six steamers of light draught were destined, under the orders of Commandant Stevens, to enter the St. John's and reduce Jacksonville. The rest of the squadron, under Dupont, was to take care of St. Augustine's and blockade the coast down to Mosquito Inlet, the passes of which would be then closed against contraband of war.

But this series of operations could not be accomplished in twenty-four hours, and twenty-four hours would be enough for the devastation of the country by the Southerners.

About three o'clock in the afternoon James Burbank had his first suspicions of what was being devised against him. Mr. Perry, after a round of inspection on the frontier of the plantation, came hurriedly into Castle House and said,—

"Mr. Burbank, they have reported that some suspicious vagabonds are on their way to Camdless Bay."

"From the north?"

"From the north."

Almost at the same moment Zermah, returning from the landing-place, told her master that there was a lot of boats crossing the river and approaching the right bank.

"They are coming from Jacksonville?"

"Certainly."

"Go into the house," said Burbank, "and don't go out again, Zermah, on any pretence."

"No, master."

Burbank went off to reconnoitre. When he returned, he could not but tell his friends that matters looked threatening. An attack seemed almost certain, and it was better that all should be forewarned.

"And so," said Mr. Stannard, "these scoundrels, on the eve of being curbed by the Federals, dare—"

"Yes," said Burbank coldly. "Texar could not miss such an opportunity of being revenged when he is free to disappear as soon as his vengeance is satisfied. Then with more animation he resumed, "But will this man's crimes always remain unpunished? Will he always get away? In truth after doubting the justice of man are we to doubt the justice of Heaven—"

"James," said Mrs. Burbank, "at a time when we may only have the help of God to trust to, do not reproach Him—"

"And let us put ourselves under His care," said Alice Stannard.

James Burbank, recovering his coolness, set about giving his orders for the defence of the house.

"Have the blacks been told?" asked Edward Carrol.

"They will be," said Burbank. "My idea is to defend the palisades. We cannot think of defending the whole boundary of Camdless Bay against an armed mob, for it is likely that the assailants will be in large numbers. We must get all the defenders into the inner ring. If, unfortunately, the palisade is forced, Castle House, which once defied the Seminoles, may perhaps be held against Texar's bandits. My wife, Alice, and Dy and Zermah, to whom I entrust them, must not leave the house without my order. If matters become serious, everything is prepared for them to save themselves by the tunnel which communicates with the little Marine Creek of the St. John's; there a boat will be found in charge of two of our men. It is hidden in the bushes; and, Zermah, you must go in it up the river to Cedar Rock."

"But you, James?"

"And you, father?"

Mrs. Burbank had seized the planter by the arm, and Alice had caught hold of Mr. Stannard, as if the time had come for them to escape from Castle House.

"We will do all we can to rejoin you," said Burbank, "when the position is no longer tenable. But you must promise, if the danger becomes too great, to get away to safety at Cedar Rock. We shall want all we have of courage and audacity to keep back the scoundrels, and resist them till our ammunition fails."

Evidently this is what would have to be done if the assailants were too numerous and succeeded in forcing the palisades and invading the park so as to make a direct attack on Castle House.

James Burbank then called together his men, and Perry and his assistants ran off to the barracoons with his orders. In less than an hour the blacks, in fighting trim, were drawn up near the gate in the palisades. Their wives and children had gone off to seek safety in the woods round Camdless Bay.

Unfortunately, the means of organizing a serious defence were limited. Since the beginning of the war it had been almost impossible to procure arms and ammunition in sufficient quantity. Burbank had in vain tried to buy them at Jacksonville: and he had to be content with what remained in the house after the last siege by the Seminoles.

His plan was to preserve Castle House from being burnt or stormed. He could not dream of protecting the estate, saving the workshops, stores, factories, or barracoons, or preventing the plantation from being devastated. He had hardly four hundred negroes in a state to oppose the assailants, and these were insufficiently armed. A few dozen muskets were distributed to the best men, while the arms of precision were kept in reserve for James Burbank, his friends, Perry, and the assistant-overseers.

The whole force was drawn up at the gate in such a manner as to repulse the threatened assault on the palisades, which were also defended by the creek that ran round them.

Amid the confusion Pygmalion was very busy and excited, bustling hither and thither and doing nothing. He was like one of those circus clowns who pretend to do everything and do nothing, much to the amusement of the audience. Pyg, considering himself as belonging specially to the defenders of the house, did not dream of associating with his comrades outside. Never had he felt himself so devoted to James Burbank.

All was ready in the garrison. On what side was the attack to come? If the assailants appeared on the northern side the defence could be most easily conducted. If, on the contrary, they attacked on the river-front, the defence would be more difficult, owing to Camdless Bay being open on that side. A landing is always a difficult operation, it is true, and, under any circumstances, it would require a good many boats to transport an armed band from one bank of the St. John's to the other. Thus said Burbank, Carrol, and Stannard as they watched the return of the scouts who had been sent to the boundary of the plantation. It would not do to be in the dark as to the manner of attack.

About half-past four in the evening the scouts returned from the northern side of the estate and made their report.

A column of armed men were advancing in that direction. Was this a detachment of the county militia or only a division of the mob, attracted by the hope of pillage, and charged with the execution of Texar's decree concerning the freed slaves? In any case, the column was a thousand strong, and nothing could be done against it with the force on the plantation. It might perhaps be hoped that, if the palisades were carried by assault, Castle House would offer a longer and more serious resistance.

It was evident that the column had avoided a landing under difficulties in the little harbour of Camdless Bay, and had crossed the river below Jacksonville in some fifty boats three or four journeys being sufficient to ferry it over. And Burbank's precaution of collecting his men within the palisades had been a wise one, for it would have been impossible for him to defend his frontier against such an army.

Who was at the head of the assailants—Texar in person? Probably not. At the time when the approach of the Federals was threatened the Spaniard might consider it too risky to place himself at the head of his men. If he had done so, it would be because, when his work of vengeance was accomplished, the plantation devastated, the Burbanks massacred or fallen into his hands, he had made up his mind to escape to the south, perhaps even to the Everglades (the backwoods of Southern Florida), where it would be difficult to get at him.

This was the most serious of the possibilities, and Burbank had given it anxious thought. Hence it was that he had decided to put in safety his wife and child, and Alice Stannard, entrusted to the devotion of Zermah, at Cedar Rock, which was about a mile above Camdless Bay. If they had to abandon Castle House to the assailants, he and his friends could there rejoin the family, and wait till safety was assured to the honest people of Florida under the protection of the Federal army.

And so a boat had been hidden in the reeds of the St.

John's, and left to the keeping of two negroes at the end of the tunnel which led from the house to Marine Creek. But before the parting took place, it would be necessary to defend the house for a few hours—at least until nightfall, when, in the darkness, the boat could go up the river in secret, without risk of pursuit from the suspicious-looking canoes that were prowling about in such numbers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EVENING OF THE 2ND OF MARCH.

JAMES BURBANK, with his companions, and most of the blacks were ready for the fight. He had now nothing to do but to wait. His arrangements were to make his first stand at the palisades round the private park, and then, if driven back, to make another stand behind the walls of Castle House.

About five o'clock the increasing tumult showed that the assailants were not far off. From the shouting it was only too easy to understand that they were in possession of the northern part of the estate. On the right, thick columns of smoke began to rise above the trees. The sawmills had been set on fire, and the barracoons, after being pillaged, were in flames. The poor people had not had time to put in safety the few things that the act of liberation had made their own the evening before; and loud were the cries of despair and anger that answered the shouts of the marauders.

Gradually the shouters approached Castle House. A strange light appeared in the northern horizon, as if the sun was setting in that direction. Occasional puffs of warm smoky air swept up against the house. Violent detonations produced by the burning of the dry wood in the workshops were heard every now and then. Once a louder explosion than the rest showed that the boiler at one of the sawmills had been blown up. Devastation in all its horrors was evidently in progress.

Burbank, Carrol, and Stannard were at the gate in the palisades. There they received and disposed of the last detachment of negroes that were gradually coming in.

The assailants might appear at any moment. The increasing crackle of the musketry showed that they could not be far from the ring, which was easy of assault, for the nearest trees were not fifty yards away. The Confederates could keep in cover to the last moment; and the bullets began to rain on the palisades, while the rifles remained invisible.

After consideration it was thought best to withdraw all the men within the fortress. There the armed negroes would be less exposed, as they could fire between the angles at the top of the timbers; and when the assailants tried to cross the stream and carry the stronghold by storm, they might manage to repulse them.

The negroes were all withdrawn, and the gate was about to be shut, when James Burbank, throwing a last glance around without, caught sight of a man at full run towards him, as if seeking safety amongst the defenders of Castle House. A few shots were aimed at him from the woods close by, but did not hit him. With a bound he jumped on the drawbridge and was in safety within the palisades. The gate was immediately shut and firmly fastened.

"Who are you?" asked James Burbank.

"One of the servants of Mr. Harvey, your correspondent at Jacksonville."

"Did Mr. Harvey send you here with a message?"

"Yes, and as the river was guarded, I could not cross it hereabouts."

"And you came with the militia without being suspected?"

"Yes. They are followed by a mob of looters. I came with them, and as soon as I was within range, I ran and risked a few shots."

"Good, my friend! Thanks! You have Mr. Harvey's message?"

"Yes, Mr. Burbank. Here it is."

Burbank took the letter and read it. Mr. Harvey said he might put implicit confidence in his messenger, John Bruce, of whose sincerity there could be no doubt. After

hearing the news he brought, Mr. Burbank would see what was best to be done.

At this instant a volley was heard from without. There was not a moment to lose.

"What would Mr. Harvey have me understand?" asked Burbank.

"That in the first place," said Bruce, "the armed mob which is attacking Camdless Bay is from fourteen to fifteen hundred strong."

"I did not reckon them at less. What next? Is Texar at their head?"

"Mr. Harvey found it impossible to ascertain. One thing is certain, and that is that Texar has not been at Jacksonville for the last four-and-twenty hours!"

"That ought to indicate some new scheme of the scoundrel's," said Burbank.

"Yes," answered Bruce. "That is what Mr. Harvey thinks. Besides, Texar need not be there to execute the order as to setting adrift the freed slaves—"

"Setting them adrift!" exclaimed Burbank. "Setting them adrift and helping them in incendiarism and robbery—"

"And Mr. Harvey thinks that while there is time, you would do well to put your family in safety by sending them away at once from Castle House."

"Castle House," said Burbank, "can be defended, and we will only leave it when it is untenable. Is there any fresh news from Jacksonville?"

"None."

"Have not the Federal troops made any movement into Florida?"

"None since they occupied Fernandina and the Bay of St. Mary's."

"And what is the chief reason of your being sent?"

"To tell you that the dispersal of the slaves was only a pretext got up by Texar to enable him to lay waste the plantation, and make you his prisoner."

"You do not know if Texar is at the head of these rascals?"

"No, Mr. Burbank. Mr. Harvey tried to find out, but could not. And I have tried since I left Jacksonville, but without success."

"Are there many of the militia with this mob?"

"A hundred, at the outside," replied Bruce, "but the mob is composed of the very worst characters. Texar had them supplied with weapons, and they will not stop at any excess. I repeat, Mr. Burbank, Mr. Harvey's opinion is that you should abandon Castle House at once. He ordered me to invite you to his cottage at Hampton Red. It is about a dozen miles up stream on the right bank, and there you would be safe for some days—"

"Yes, I know."

"I could take you and your family there without risk of discovery, if you will go at once, before retreat is impossible."

"I thank Mr. Harvey, and you too, my friend," said Burbank, "but we have not yet come to that."

"As you wish, Mr. Burbank," answered Bruce. "I shall none the less remain until you require my services."

The attack, which now began, required all James Burbank's attention.

A violent fusilade burst out, although the assailants could not be seen owing to the shelter of the trees. The bullets rained on the palisades, but did little damage. Unfortunately, Burbank and his companions could only reply feebly, having only forty guns amongst them. Being stationed in the best positions for firing effectively, their shots did more execution than those of the militiamen at the head of the column, a few of whom were hit, though hidden in the wood.

This long-range fight lasted for about half an hour, rather to the advantage of the defenders. Then the assailants rushed at the palisades to storm them. As the attack was to be delivered on several sides at once, they brought with them planks and beams from the workshops, now in flames. In twenty places these beams were thrown across the stream, and over them rushed the Spaniard's men to the foot of the palisades, losing several of their

number in killed and wounded. And then they climbed up the planks and hoisted one another up ; but they did not succeed in getting over. The negroes, infuriated against the incendiaries, repulsed them with great bravery. But it was evident that the defenders of Camdless Bay could not for long hold out at all points, against the murderous foe. Until nightfall they might keep them at bay, providing they were not seriously wounded. Burbank and Stannard had, however, not been touched. Carrol alone had been hit, by a ball that tore open his shoulder. He had to retire to the hall, where Mrs. Burbank, Alice, and Zermah gave him every attention.

But night was coming to the help of the besiegers. Under cover of the darkness some fifty of the most determined amongst them ran up to the gate, axe in hand. Probably they would not have been able to force it had not a breach been opened by a daring manœuvre.

A part of the outbuildings suddenly took fire, and the flames, fed by the dry wood, seized on the palisades against which the building leant.

Burbank rushed towards the fire, if not to put it out, at least to defend the breach.

By the light of the flames he saw a man run through the smoke, climb the palisades, and escape over the planks across the stream.

It was one of the assailants, who had penetrated into the park on the St. John's side, from among the reeds. Unseen, he had entered the stables, and at the risk of perishing in the flames, had set fire to some trusses of straw.

A breach was thus opened. In vain Burbank and his companions endeavoured to bar the way. A mass of assailants threw themselves into it, and the park was invaded by several hundred men.

Many fell in the hand-to-hand fight. The noise of the firing was heard on all sides. Soon Castle House was entirely surrounded, while the negroes, overwhelmed by the numbers, were forced out of the park to take flight in the woods of Camdless Bay. They had fought as long as

they could, with courage and devotion; but if they had resisted longer, they would have been massacred to the last man.

Burbank, Stannard, Perry, the assistant-overseers, John Bruce, who had fought bravely, and a few blacks had to take refuge in Castle House.

It was then nearly eight o'clock in the evening. The night was dark in the west. In the north the sky was ablaze with the glare of the conflagration.

Burbank and Stannard came hurriedly into the house.

"You must escape," said Burbank. "You must go at once. Whether the thieves force their way in, or are kept outside till we are obliged to surrender, there is danger in your remaining. The boat is ready. It is time to part. My wife, Alice, I implore you to follow Zermah with Dy to Cedar Rock. There you will be in safety, and if we are compelled to escape in our turn, we will find you there, we will join you."

"My father," said Alice, "come with us, and you too, Mr. Burbank."

"Yes, James! Yes! Come!" said Mrs. Burbank.

"I!" answered Burbank, "I abandon Castle House to these scoundrels! Never, while resistance is possible! We can hold out for some time yet. And when you are in safety we shall be stronger to defend ourselves!"

"James!"

"It is necessary!"

A terrible tumult was heard as he spoke. The door resounded with the blows dealt on it by the assailants, who were attacking the principal or river front of the house.

"Go!" exclaimed Burbank. "The night is already dark; they will not see you in the shadow! Go! you are only paralyzing us by remaining here! For God's sake, go!"

Zermah went first, holding little Dy by the hand. Mrs. Burbank tore herself from her husband's arms, Alice left her father's. They disappeared down the staircase which led below the ground into the tunnel to Marine Creek.

"And now," said Burbank, addressing himself to Perry, the assistant-overseers, and the few negroes remaining, "now, my friends, we must resist to the death."

Then they all ascended the grand staircase from the hall, and took up their positions at the windows on the first floor. There, to the hundreds of bullets that honeycombed the front of the house, they answered by fewer but more effective discharges, firing, as they did, into the mass of the assailants, who came on to force their way through the door either by axe or flame. There was no one this time to open a breach into the house. Such an attempt as that against the wooden palisades would have been useless against stone walls.

Nevertheless, a score of men, stealing along in the darkness, which now was profound, gathered on the steps. The door was then attacked furiously. It needed all its solidity to withstand the blows of the picks and axes. The attempt cost many of the assailants their lives, for the position of the loopholes admitted of a cross fire on to the step.

And now something happened to make matters worse. Ammunition began to fail. Burbank, his friends and overseers, and the blacks, armed with guns, had used the greater part during the three hours the assault had lasted. If they had to hold out much longer, how could they do it after the last cartridges had gone? Would they have to abandon Castle House to the mob, who would leave nothing of it but ruins?

And this would certainly have to be done if the assailants broke in the door, which had already begun to shake. Burbank saw this, but he resolved to wait till the last. At any moment might not a diversion take place? There was now nothing to fear for Mrs. Burbank, his daughter, nor Alice Stannard. And as men they could fight to the end against this rabble of murderers, incendiaries, and thieves.

"We have still ammunition for an hour," said Burbank. "Use it all, my friends, and don't let us give up Castle House."

He had hardly finished speaking when a loud report was heard in the distance.

"A cannon-shot!" he exclaimed.

Another report was heard to the westward, on the other side of the river.

"A second shot!" said Stannard.

"Listen!" said Burbank.

A third report was heard, the wind bringing it more distinctly to Castle House.

"Is that a signal to recall the assailants to the right bank?" asked Stannard.

"Perhaps," said Bruce. "It is possible that there has been an alarm over there."

"Yes," said the overseer; "and if these cannon-shots have not been fired from Jacksonville—"

"They have been fired from the Federal fleet!" said Burbank. "Has the flotilla forced the entrance of the St. John's and mounted the river?"

And there was nothing impossible in Commodore Dupont's being now master of the river, at least in the lower part of its course.

But it was not so. The three gunshots had been fired from the battery at Jacksonville; that was quite evident, as no more firing was heard. There had been no engagement between the Northerners and Confederates on the St. John's or in the plains of Duval county.

And there could be no doubt that this had been the signal of recall to the commander of the militia when Perry, who was stationed at one of the side loopholes, exclaimed,—

"They are retiring! They are retiring!"

Burbank and his companions hurried to the central window, which they opened.

The sounds of the axe were no longer heard against the door. Not one of the assailants was in sight. If their shouts and yells were still heard in the air, they were heard further and further away.

Evidently something had happened to oblige the authorities at Jacksonville to recall this mob to the other bank of the St. John's. Doubtless it had been agreed that

three gunshots should be fired in case any movement of the squadron should threaten the Confederate position.

So the assailants had abruptly abandoned their final assault, and across the devastated fields of the estate had taken their way, lighted by the fires they had kindled. An hour later they re-crossed the river two miles below Camdless Bay, where the boats were waiting for them.

Soon their shouts died away in the distance. To the uproar succeeded absolute silence. It was as the silence of death over the plantation.

It was then half-past nine o'clock. Burbank and his companions went downstairs to the hall. There lay Edward Carrol, stretched on the sofa, slightly wounded, and somewhat weakened by the loss of blood.

They told him what had happened since the signal from Jacksonville. For the moment, at least, Castle House had nothing to fear from Texar's gang.

"Yes," said James Burbank. "But the scoundrel wished to disperse my liberated slaves, and they are dispersed! He wished to lay waste the plantation in revenge, and only its ruins are left!"

"James," said Walter Stannard, "worse misfortunes might still happen to us. None of us fell in defending Castle House; but your wife, your daughter, and my daughter might have passed into the hands of these rascals, and they are safe."

"You are right, Stannard, and God be praised for it! What has been done by Texar's orders shall not go unpunished, and I will have justice to the last drop of his blood."

"It is a pity," said Carrol, "that Mrs. Burbank, Alice, Dy, and Zermah left us! I know we seemed to be in great danger then; but I would rather know they were here."

"Before the morning," said Burbank, "I will rejoin them. They will be dreadfully anxious, and we must set their minds at rest. I will then see if we can bring them back to Camdless Bay, or leave them for a day or two at Cedar Rock."

"Yes," said Stannard. "We must not be hasty. All may not be over; and as long as Jacksonville is under Texar's control we have something to fear."

"That is why I will act prudently," answered Burbank. "Perry, you will see that a boat is ready a little before daybreak. I shall only want one man to go with me—"

A cry of grief, a shout of despair, suddenly interrupted him.

The cry came from that part of the park where the lawn lay in front of the house. It was immediately followed by the words—

"Father! Father!"

"My daughter's voice!" exclaimed Mr. Stannard.

"What new misfortune!" asked Burbank. And opening the door they rushed out.

Alice was standing a few yards away, and at her feet lay Mrs. Burbank.

Neither Dy nor Zermah were with them.

"My child!" exclaimed Burbank. At the sound of his voice his wife rose. She could not speak. She stretched out her arms towards the river.

"Carried off? Carried off?"

"Yes! by Texar!" said Alice.

And then she fell senseless by Mrs. Burbank's side.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SIX DAYS THAT FOLLOWED.

WHEN Mrs. Burbank and Alice were in the tunnel leading to Marine Creek, Zermah was in front. The slave held the little girl with one hand; with the other she carried a lantern, by whose feeble light they walked. When she reached the end of the tunnel Zermah asked Mrs. Burbank to wait for her. She intended to make sure that the boat and the two negroes that were to take them to Cedar Rock were at their post. Opening the door at the end of the tunnel she stepped out towards the river.

For a minute—only a minute—Mrs. Burbank and Alice waited for Zermah's return, when Alice noticed that Dy was not with them.

"Dy! Dy!" shouted Mrs. Burbank, at the risk of betraying her presence.

The child did not answer. Accustomed to follow Zermah, she had gone with her out of the tunnel towards the creek before her mother had noticed her.

Suddenly a groaning was heard. Fearing some new danger, and thinking not for a moment of their own safety, they ran out to the bank of the creek, and reached it just in time to see a boat disappearing in the darkness.

"Help! Help! It is Texar!" shouted Zermah.

"Texar! Texar!" shouted Alice in reply. And with her hand she pointed to the Spaniard, revealed by the reflection of the fires at Camdless Bay. He was standing upright in the boat which rapidly shot away.

Then all was silent.

The two negroes with their throats cut lay dead on the ground.

Then Mrs. Burbank, in distraction, followed by Alice, who in vain tried to stop her, ran along the bank, calling after her little daughter. No cry answered to hers. The boat had become invisible, either because the gloom had veiled it from her sight, or because it had crossed the river to some point on the left bank.

For an hour this vain pursuit continued. At last Mrs. Burbank fell exhausted. Alice, with extraordinary energy, helped the unfortunate mother to rise, supported her, and almost carried her. In the distance, in the direction of Castle House, rang out the reports of the firearms, mingled every now and then with the terrible yells of the besiegers. But it was necessary to go back in that direction, to try and get back to the house along the tunnel, to open the door which communicated with the underground stairs. When she reached that spot how would Alice make herself heard?

She dragged Mrs. Burbank along, but the mother was unconscious of what she was doing. Twenty times did they stop as they returned along the riverside. At any instant they might fall into the hands of those who were wrecking the plantation. Would it be better to wait till daylight? But how in this place could she give Mrs. Burbank the attention her state required? And so, cost what it might, Alice resolved to get back to Castle House. And as the winding of the river lengthened the way, she thought it would be better to go straight across the fields, guided by the light of the burning barracoons. This she did, and thus it was she came near the house.

There Mrs. Burbank fell motionless at her feet. She could support her no longer.

By this time the detachment of militia, followed by the horde of pillagers, had given up the assault, and were far from the palisades. Not a shout was heard within or without. Alice imagined that the assailants had captured the house and abandoned it without leaving one of its defenders alive. Supreme was her anguish; her strength failed her, and she, too, fell to the ground, while a last groan escaped from her, a last appeal. It had been heard.

Burbank and his friends had rushed out. Now they knew all that had passed at Marine Creek. What mattered it to them that the plunderers had gone? What mattered it to them that there was no fear of falling into their power? A dreadful misfortune had come to them. Little Dy was in the hands of Texar!

This was the story told by Alice, broken with many sobs, and listened to by Mrs. Burbank, who had returned to consciousness and was bathed in tears. This is what was learnt by Burbank, Stannard, Carrol, Perry, and their few companions. The poor child, taken they knew not where, in the hands of her father's cruellest enemy! What could be worse than that? Could the future have greater griefs in store?

All were overwhelmed at the blow. Mrs. Burbank was taken to her room and laid on her bed, and Alice remained with her.

Below, in the hall, Burbank and his friends endeavoured to devise some plan by which they could recover Dy and rescue Zermah from Texar's hands. The devoted half-breed would certainly endeavour to defend the child to the death! But as the prisoner of a scoundrel animated by personal hatred, would she not pay with her life for the curses she hurled at him?

Then James Burbank blamed himself for having forced his wife to leave Castle House, for having arranged such a means of flight which had turned out so badly. Was Texar's presence at Marine Creek to be attributed to chance? Evidently not. Texar, in some way or another, had heard of the existence of the tunnel. He had said to himself that the defenders of Camdless Bay would endeavour to escape by it when they could no longer hold out in the house. And, after leading his men to the right bank of the river, after forcing the palisades, and driving Burbank behind the walls of the house, there could be no doubt he and some of his accomplices had posted themselves near Marine Creek. There he had suddenly surprised the two blacks in charge of the boat, and cut their throats, their cries being unheard amid the tumult

made by the besiegers of the house. The Spaniard had waited till Zermah appeared with little Dy close behind. Seeing them alone, he probably thought that neither Mrs. Burbank, nor her husband, nor her friends were going to leave Castle House. Then he would have to be content with this prey, and had seized on the child and the half-breed to carry them off to some retreat whence it would be impossible to recover them.

And with what more terrible blow could the scoundrel have visited the Burbanks?

A horrible night was passed by the survivors. Was there not a chance that the assailants might return in greater numbers and better armed? Fortunately, they did not. When the day broke there had been no renewal of the attack.

But it was important to know why the three cannon-shots had been fired the night before, and why the assailants had retired when one effort more—an hour's effort at the outside—would have given them the house. Was the recall due to some demonstration of the Federals at the mouth of the St. John's? Had Commodore Dupont's ships become masters of Jacksonville? Nothing in Burbank's interest could be more desirable. In all safety he could begin his search to recover Dy and Zermah, and openly attack Texar—if the Spaniard had not retreated with his partisans—and prosecute him as the promoter of the havoc at Camdless Bay and the double abduction of the half-breed and child.

This time no such *alibi* was possible as that which the Spaniard had produced at the opening of this history, when he appeared before the magistrate at Saint Augustine. If Texar was not at the head of this band of scoundrels who had invaded Camdless Bay—as Mr. Harvey's messenger had been unable to ascertain—the last cry of Zermah had only too clearly revealed the part he took in the abduction. And had not Alice recognized him as the boat was rowing away?

Yes! Federal justice would make the scoundrel confess where he had taken his victims, and punish the crimes which he could not deny.

Unfortunately, nothing happened to confirm this hypothesis concerning the arrival of the Northern flotilla in the waters of the St. John's. At this date, the 3rd of March, no ship had left the bay of St. Mary's, as was only too clearly ascertained by the news which one of the assistant-overseers brought in during the day from the other bank of the river, to which he had gone to inquire. No vessel had appeared off Pablo light. The whole fleet was employed at Fernandina and Fort Clinch. It seemed as though Commodore Dupont could only advance into the centre of Florida with extreme circumspection. At Jacksonville the rioters were still in power. After the expedition to Camdless Bay the Spaniard had again appeared in the town, and was organizing the defence against Stevens's gunboats, should they try to cross the bar. Doubtless some false alarm the evening before had called back the looters. After all, was not Texar's vengeance sufficient, now that the plantation had been wasted, the factories fired, the negroes dispersed in the forests with nothing but the ruins of the barracoons left to them, and little Dy taken away from her father and mother, with no trace as to where she had gone?

Of this James Burbank felt only too certain, when during the morning he and Walter Stannard explored the right bank of the river. In vain they searched the smaller creeks for some clue as to the direction taken by the boat. The search could at the best be but incomplete, unless the left bank was searched as well.

But at this time, was not this impossible? Would it not be necessary to wait till Texar and his partisans were reduced to impotence by the arrival of the Federals? With Mrs. Burbank in such a state, Alice unable to leave her, and Carrol laid up for some days, would it not be imprudent to leave them alone at Castle House, when the return of the assailants was not unlikely?

And what was even more maddening was, that Burbank could not dream of proceeding against Texar, either for the devastation of his estate, nor the abduction of Zermah and his daughter. The only magistrate to whom he could

address himself was the author of the crime. All that could be done was to wait until regular justice had resumed its course at Jacksonville.

"James," said Mr. Stannard, "if the dangers which threaten your child are terrible, at least Zermah is with her, and you can depend on her devotion—"

"Till death—quite so!" said Burbank. "And when will Zermah be dead?"

"Listen, my dear James. Consider for a moment. It is not Texar's interest to proceed to such extremities. He has not yet left Jacksonville, and until he has I think his victims have no act of violence to fear. Your child will be a guarantee, a hostage against the reprisals which he has to guard against, not only from you, but from the Federals, for having suspended the regular authorities of Jacksonville, and devastated a Northener's plantation. It is his interest to spare them, and wait till Dupont and Sherman are masters of the territory before you do anything against him."

"And when will that be?" asked Burbank.

"To-morrow! To-day, perhaps! I tell you, Dy is Texar's safeguard. It is for that purpose he took the opportunity of carrying her off, knowing that it would also break your heart, my poor James; and the scoundrel has succeeded only too well."

Thus reasoned Mr. Stannard, and he had good grounds for doing so. Would he convince James Burbank? Doubtless, no. Would he give him any hope? None. It was impossible. But Burbank saw that he must force himself to talk before his wife as Stannard had talked to him. Otherwise she would not survive the blow. And when he reached home, he made much use of the arguments which had no effect upon himself.

Meanwhile, Perry and his assistant overseers visited Camdless Bay. It was a heartrending spectacle which even made a great impression on Pygmalion, who accompanied them. The "free man" had never dreamt of following the freed slaves dispersed by Texar. The liberty to sleep in the woods and suffer cold and hunger seemed

to him excessive. As he preferred to remain at Castle House, he ought, like Zermah, to have torn up his act of enfranchisement to gain the right to live there.

"You see, Pyg!" said Mr. Perry, "the plantation is laid waste, our workshops are in ruins. That is what has been the cost of giving liberty to people of your colour."

"Mr. Perry," replied Pygmalion, "it is not my fault—"

"It is your fault. If fellows like you had not applauded the speechifiers who thundered against slavery, if you had protested against the ideas of the North, if you had taken arms to repulse the Federal troops, Mr. Burbank would never have to think of freeing you, and disaster would never have come to Camdless Bay."

"But what can I do now?" said the disconsolate Pyg. "What can I do, Mr. Perry?"

"I will tell you, Pyg, if you have the least feeling of justice about you. You are free, are you not?"

"It seems so."

"And consequently, you belong to yourself?"

"Certainly."

"And if you belong to yourself, there is nothing to stop you from doing what you like with yourself?"

"Nothing, Mr. Perry."

"Well, in your place, Pyg, I should not hesitate. I would go to the nearest plantation and again become a slave, and the price I realized by my sale I would bring back to my old master, to indemnify him for the wrong I did him when he set me free!"

Did the overseer speak seriously? It was impossible to know what nonsense the witty man might talk once he had mounted his hobby. Pygmalion, the piteous Pygmalion, disconcerted, irresolute, abashed, did not know what to reply.

It was only too evident that James Burbank's act of generosity had brought misfortune and ruin on the plantation. The disaster would cost him a considerable amount of money. There were no barracoons left; they had fallen after they had been sacked. The sawmills and workshops were only heaps of cinders from which grey wreaths of

smoke still rose. In place of the stores where the timber was kept, of the factories where the cotton was heckled, of the hydraulic presses where it was squeezed into bales, of the sugar-mills, there were only blackened walls ready to fall, and where the chimney of the factory rose, there was now but a mound of reddened bricks. The fields of coffee and rice, the kitchen garden, the enclosures for the domestic animals, had been completely laid waste, as if a herd of wild beasts had ravaged them for hours. At the sight of this lamentable spectacle, Mr. Perry could hardly contain himself. His anger escaped in threatening words. Pygmalion felt anything but comfortable at the fierce looks the overseer gave him ; and he ended by leaving, to return to Castle House, in order that, as he said, he might reflect more at his ease on the proposition as to selling himself, which the overseer had made. And, doubtless, the day was not long enough for his reflection, for when evening came, he was still undecided.

During the day a few of the old slaves returned in secret to Camdless Bay. It may be imagined what was their distress when they found not a single hut undestroyed. James Burbank gave orders that as much as possible should be done for them. A certain number were lodged within the palisades in the servants' quarters that the fire had not touched. They were, at first, employed in burying their companions who had died in the defence of the house, and also the corpses of the assailants who had fallen in the attack—the wounded had been carried away by their comrades. And they also buried the two negroes who had been killed by Texar and his accomplices when surprised at their post near Marine Creek.

This done, James Burbank could not set about getting his estate again into order until the question between North and South was settled in Florida. Other cares, equally serious but very different, absorbed his attention night and day. All in his power to do to recover some trace of his little daughter he did. Mrs. Burbank's health was in a precarious state, although Alice had not left her

for a moment, and watched over her with filial solicitude; and it was necessary to find a doctor for her.

There was one in Jacksonville who possessed the full confidence of the Burbanks; and as soon as he was sent for he did not hesitate to come to Camdless Bay. He prescribed a few remedies. But would they be efficacious so long as Dy remained unrestored to her mother?

Leaving Carrol, who would have to keep to his room for some days, Burbank and Stannard went out each day to explore both banks of the river. They searched the islands in the St. John's; they asked the country people; they inquired in the smallest villages in the county; they promised a heavy reward to any one who would bring them any clue. Their efforts remained useless. How could they learn what was going on in Black Creek where the Spaniard hid himself? No one knew of it. And, besides, to withdraw his victims the better from all search, had not Texar taken them further up the river? Was not the county large enough, were there not enough hiding-places in the vast forests in the centre, amid the immense marshes in the South of Florida, in the region of the inaccessible Everglades, for Texar to hide his victims so that they could not be reached?

At the same time, through the doctor coming to Camdless Bay, Burbank was kept informed of what was passing at Jacksonville and in the north of Duval County.

The Federals had made no new demonstration. Had special instructions arrived from Washington forbidding them to cross the frontier? Such a proceeding would be disastrous for the Unionists in the South, and particularly so for James Burbank.

Nevertheless, Commodore Dupont's squadron remained in the estuary of the St. Mary's, and if Texar's men had been recalled by the three canon-shots fired on the 2nd of March, it was because the Jacksonville authorities had been deceived by a false alarm; and, through the error, Castle House had escaped from pillage and ruin.

But would not the Spaniard send another expedition to complete his work, seeing that James Burbank was not in

his hands? An unlikely hypothesis! At present, the attack on Castle House and the carrying off of Dy and Zermah were probably enough for him. Besides, some of the better-class citizens had not hesitated to show their disapprobation of the affair at Camdless Bay, and their disgust at the chief of the Jacksonville rioters, although their opinion might matter little to Texar. The Spaniard was more powerful than ever in Duval County. His vagabonds and unscrupulous adventurers were quite at their ease. Each day they gave themselves up to pleasures of all sorts, degenerating into orgies. The noise of the merry-makings even reached the plantation; and the sky glowed with the public illuminations, which might be taken for the light of another incendiary fire. Moderate men were reduced to silence, and had to submit to the yoke of this faction, which was supported by the populace of the county.

The temporary inaction of the Federal army opportunely came in to help the new authorities, who profited by it to spread the report that the Northerners would not pass the frontier; that they had received orders to retreat into Georgia and the Carolinas; that Florida would not be subjected to the invasion of the anti-slavery troops; that its position as an old Spanish colony put it outside the question the United States were seeking to solve by force of arms, &c., &c. And in all the counties there was produced a certain current favourable rather than contrary to the ideas which the partizans of violence represented. This was apparent in many places, particularly in the north, on the Georgian frontier, where the planters with Northern sympathies were atrociously treated, their slaves put to flight, their sawmills and factories destroyed by fire, their establishments devastated by the Confederate troops, as Camdless Bay had just been by the populace of Jacksonville.

It did not, however, seem—at present at least—that there was a chance of the plantation being again invaded. But much did James Burbank chafe at the delay of the Federals in making themselves masters of the territory.

As things stood, nothing could be done against Texar; either to bring him to justice for what could not be denied, or compel him to reveal the hiding-place of Dy and Zermah.

Burbank could not bring himself to believe that the Federals were going to remain quietly on the frontier. Gilbert's last letter had expressly stated that the expedition of Commodore Dupont and Sherman was destined for Florida. Since this letter, had the Federal Government sent different orders to Edisto Bay, where the squadron was waiting? Had a success of the Confederate troops in Virginia or the Carolinas obliged the army of the Union to halt in its march to the South?

Thus passed the five days which followed the attack on Camdless Bay. There was no news of a movement of the Federals. No news of Dy and Zermah, although Burbank had done his best to come on their track, and not a day had passed without some fresh effort.

The 9th of March had come. Edward Carrol had completely recovered. He was now fit to join in the work of his friends. Mrs. Burbank continued extremely weak. It seemed as though her life threatened to take flight with her tears. In her delirium she called her little daughter in heartrending tones; she attempted to go in search of her. These crises were followed by syncopes, which put her life in danger. Often and often Alice feared that the unhappy mother would die in her arms.

A war rumour reached Jacksonville on the morning of the 9th of March. Unfortunately, it was calculated to give new encouragement to the partizans of Secession.

The Confederate general, Van Dorn, had repulsed the soldiers of Curtis on the 6th of March at the battle of Betonville, in Arkansas, and obliged them to retreat. Really this was an engagement with the rear-guard of a small Northern corps; and the success was more than compensated for a few days afterwards by the victory of Pea Ridge. It, however, provoked an increase of insolence among the Southerners. At Jacksonville, the unimportant action was celebrated as a complete check to the Federal

army; and there were new festivities and new orgies, the murmur of which rolled mournfully over Camdless Bay.

When James Burbank returned, about six o'clock in the evening, from his exploration of the left bank of the river, he had ascertained the following facts.

A native of Putnam county fancied he had discovered some trace of the abduction on an island of the St. John's a few miles above Black Creek. During the preceding night this man thought he had heard a cry of despair, and had come to report the fact to James Burbank. Squambo, the Indian, Texar's confidant, had been seen in the neighbourhood in his skiff. There was no doubt about the Indian's being seen, for the fact was confirmed by a passenger on board the *Shannon*, who, on his return to St. Augustine, had landed during the day at Camdless Bay.

It need not be said how eagerly James Burbank started on the track. Carrol and two negroes accompanied him in the boat with which he started up the river. They speedily reached the island in question, thoroughly searched it, and visited a few fishermen's huts that did not seem to have been recently occupied. Among the almost impenetrable underwood in the interior there was not a vestige of human beings. There was nothing on the bank to show that a boat had put in. Squambo could nowhere be seen, and if he had been prowing round the island he had probably not landed. The expedition was thus without result, like the others. The return had to be made to the plantation with the knowledge that a false track had been followed. In the evening, Burbank, Stannard, and Carrol, as they were together in the hall, talked over this useless search. About nine o'clock, Alice, having left Mrs. Burbank asleep, came to join them, and found that the last attempt had been without result.

The night was to be a dark one. The moon, in its first quarter, had already disappeared below the horizon. A deep silence enveloped Castle House, the plantation, and the river. The few blacks in the servants' apartments were asleep. When the silence was troubled it was by the distant clamour and the reports of the fireworks at

Jacksonville, where, with great uproar, the people were celebrating the successes of the Confederates.

Each time the noise was heard in the hall another blow was struck at the Burbanks.

"We ought to find out what it means," said Carrol, "and see if the Federals really have renounced their plans on Florida."

"Yes! It must be done," answered Stannard. "We cannot exist in this uncertainty."

"Well," said Burbank, "I will go to Fernandina to-morrow—and then I will see—"

At this moment there came a gentle tap on the front door of Castle House, on the side facing the river.

A scream escaped from Alice, who rushed to the door. Burbank vainly tried to keep the girl back. And as no reply had come, another knock was heard, this time more distinctly.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FEW HOURS.

JAMES BURBANK stepped to the door. He did not expect anybody. It might be some important news from Jacksonville brought by John Bruce from his correspondent, Mr. Harvey.

A third time there came a knock, and from a more impatient hand.

"Who is there?" asked James Burbank.

"I am," was the reply.

"Gilbert!" exclaimed Alice.

She was not mistaken. Gilbert at Camdless Bay! Gilbert appearing among his people, glad to come and pass a few hours with them, knowing nothing, doubtless, of the disasters that had fallen on them!

In a moment the young lieutenant was in his father's arms; while the man who accompanied him carefully shut the door, after taking a last look round outside.

It was Mars, Zermah's husband, Gilbert Burbank's devoted follower.

After embracing his father, Gilbert turned round. Then, seeing Alice, he took her hand and clasped it with an irresistible movement of affection.

"My mother!" he said. "Where is mother? Is it true that she is dying?"

"You know all, then?" said James Burbank,

"I know all: the plantation laid waste by the Jacksonville ruffians, the attack on Castle House, my mother—dead perhaps!"

The young man's presence in the county where he ran such peril was immediately explained.

This is what had happened:

That evening, some gunboats from Commodore Dupont's squadron had come to the mouth of the St. John's. Ascending the river, they had had to stop at the bar, four miles below Jacksonville. A few hours later, a man, calling himself one of the lighthouse-keepers at Pablo, had boarded Stevens's gunboat, on which Gilbert was second in command. The man had related all that had passed at Jacksonville, including the attack on Camdless Bay, the dispersal of the blacks, and the serious condition of Mrs. Burbank. It may be guessed what were Gilbert's feelings on listening to the story of these deplorable events.

Then he was seized with an irresistible desire to see his mother. With the permission of Commandant Stevens he had left the flotilla in the gig. Accompanied by the faithful Mars, he passed unnoticed in the darkness—by the way he knew so well—and landed half a mile below Camdless Bay, so as to avoid touching at the pier, which would probably be watched.

But what he did not know, and could not know, was that he had fallen into a snare spread by Texar. At any price the Spaniard desired to obtain the proof required by the magistrates—the proof that James Burbank was in correspondence with the enemy. To entice the young lieutenant to Camdless Bay, a lighthouse-keeper at Pablo had been sent to acquaint Gilbert with what had occurred at Castle House, particularly the condition of his mother. The young lieutenant had set out, as we know; and he had been watched as he went up the river. As he glided along by the reeds that bordered the high bank of the St. John's he had, however, thrown the Spaniard's men off the track; but though the spies had not seen him land below Camdless Bay, they hoped to capture him on his return, particularly as all that part of the river was under their surveillance.

"Mother!" continued Gilbert, "where is she?"

"Here, my son!" said Mrs. Burbank.

She had just appeared on the landing of the hall stair-

case; she descended slowly, holding the rail, and fell on a couch, while Gilbert covered her with kisses.

In her troubled sleep she had heard the knock at the door. Recognizing her son's voice, she had collected sufficient strength to get up and meet Gilbert, to weep with him and the others. The young man clasped her in his arms.

"Mother! mother!" said he, "I see you again, after all. How you are suffering! But you live! Ah! we will cure you! Yes! These evil days will soon end. We shall be re-united—soon! We will give you back your health. Fear nothing for me, mother. No one knows that Mars and I are here." And as he spoke, Gilbert saw his mother was fainting, and tried to revive her by his caresses.

But Mars seemed to understand that he and Gilbert did not know the full extent of the calamity. James Burbank, Carrol, and Stannard stood silent with bowed heads. Alice could not restrain her tears. Dy was not there, nor was Zermah, who ought to have guessed that her husband was at Camdless Bay, that he was in the house, that he was waiting——

So, with his heart torn by anguish, he looked into all the corners of the hall, and then asked Mr. Burbank,—

"Master, what is the matter?"

At this moment Gilbert rose.

"And Dy?" he asked. "Has Dy gone to bed? Where is my little sister?"

"Where is my wife?" said Mars.

An instant afterwards the young officer and Mars knew all. In coming from the St. John's, from the place where their canoe was waiting for them, they had seen enough in the darkness of the ruins of the plantation. But they might naturally think that, with the disaster consequent on the enfranchisement of the blacks, the limit had been reached! Now nothing was hid from them. One did not find his sister at home, the other did not find his wife, and no one could tell them where Texar had hidden them for these seven days.

Gilbert returned to kneel near Mrs. Burbank. His tears

mingled with hers. Mars, with bloodshot face and panting chest, walked to and fro, unable to contain himself.

At last his rage exploded.

"I will kill Texar!" he said. "I will go to Jacksonville —to-morrow—this very night—this very instant——"

"Yes, come, Mars! come!" said Gilbert.

James Burbank stopped them.

"If that was what ought to be done," said he, "I should not have waited for you to come, my son! The scoundrel would already have paid with his life for his evil deeds. But, before that is done, it is necessary that he should say what he alone can say. And when I speak thus, Gilbert —when I advise you and Mars to wait—it is because it is necessary to wait."

"Be it so, father!" said the young man. "But at least I will ransack the country; I will search—"

"And do you think I have not done so? Not a day has passed without our exploring the river-banks and islands which might serve as a refuge for Texar, and not a trace have we found, not a thing to put us on your sister's track. Carrol and Stannard have helped me, and up to now our search has been fruitless."

"Why did you not lodge a complaint at Jacksonville?" asked the young officer. "Why have you not brought an action against Texar for having caused the pillage of Camdless Bay and the abduction—"

"Why?" answered James Burbank. "Because Texar is now the master; because all honest men tremble before the scoundrels who are devoted to him; because the populace is with him, and the county militia is with him."

"I will kill Texar!" said Mars, as if he were possessed by some fixed idea.

"You shall kill him when the time comes," said James Burbank. "At present it would make matters worse."

"And when will the time come?" asked Gilbert.

"When the Federals are masters of Florida—when they have occupied Jacksonville."

"And if it is then too late?"

"My son! my son! I beseech you do not say that!" exclaimed Mrs. Burbank.

"No, Gilbert, do not say that," added Alice.

James Burbank took his son's hand.

"Gilbert, listen to me," he said. "We, like you and Mars, will do instant justice on Texar if he refuses to tell us what he has done with his victims. But for your sister's sake, Gilbert—for your wife's sake, Mars—our anger must give place to our prudence. There is good reason to believe that in Texar's hands Dy and Zermah are hostages for his safety. The scoundrel is afraid of having to answer for turning out the honest magistrates of Jacksonville and letting loose on Camdless Bay the mob of scoundrels to burn and pillage a Northerner's plantation. If I did not believe this, Gilbert, would I speak with such conviction? Would I be strong enough to wait?"

"And would I still be alive?" asked Mrs. Burbank. The unfortunate woman felt that if her son went to Jacksonville he would fall into Texar's power. And what could save an officer of the Federal navy fallen into the power of the Southerners when the Federals were threatening Florida?

Nevertheless, the young officer was not master of himself. He was obstinate in his wish to go; and, like Mars, he repeated, "I will kill Texar!"

"Come, then!" he said.

"You shall not go, Gilbert!"

Mrs. Burbank raised herself from the sofa. She placed herself before the door; but, exhausted by the effort, she could not support herself, and she fainted.

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed the young man.

Mrs. Burbank had to be carried to her room, where Alice remained with her. Then James Burbank rejoined Carrol and Stannard in the hall.

Gilbert was sitting on the sofa with his face in his hands. Mars was standing apart, and silent.

"Now, Gilbert," said James Burbank, "you are in your right senses. Speak! On what you say depends what we shall do. Our only hope is in a prompt arrival of the

Federals in the county. Have they given up their project of occupying Florida?"

"No."

"Where are they?"

"A part of the squadron at this moment is on the way to Saint Augustine, to blockade the coast."

"But is not the Commodore going to take possession of the St. John's?" asked Carrol.

"The lower course of the St. John's is ours. Our gunboats are anchored in the river under the orders of Commandant Stevens."

"In the river, and they have not yet endeavoured to seize on Jacksonville?" asked Stannard.

"No, for they have had to stop at the bar, four miles below the town."

"The gunboats stopped," said James Burbank, "and by an insurmountable obstacle?"

"Yes, father," answered Gilbert; "stopped by want of water. The tide must be high for them to pass the bar, and even then the passage would be difficult. Mars knows the channel, and he is to be the pilot."

"Waiting! always waiting!" exclaimed James Burbank. "And for how long?"

Three days or twenty-four hours—how long the time would be for the people in Castle House! And if the Confederates saw that they could not defend the town! If they abandoned it, as they had abandoned Fernandina, Fort Clinch, and the other points of Georgia and northern Florida! If Texar did not run away! Then where would they search!

Mr. Stannard then asked if it was true that the Federals had met with a repulse in the North. What was thought of the defeat at Bentonville?

"The victory of Pea Ridge has enabled Curtis to re-occupy the ground he for a moment lost. The situation of the Northerners is excellent; their success is assured in a delay which it was difficult to foresee. When they have occupied the principal points in Florida, they will stop contraband of war from entering through the coast passes;

and arms and ammunition will no longer reach the Confederates. Then, in a little time, the territory will resume its calm and security under the protection of our squadron. Yes, in a few days! But now—"

The idea of his sister being exposed to such peril returned to him with such force that Mr. Burbank, to divert his attention, changed the conversation. How did the belligerents stand? Could Gilbert give them any news which had not reached Jacksonville or rather Camdless Bay?

Several things he could tell them, some of them of great importance for the Northerners in Florida.

It will be remembered that after the victory of Donelson, the State of Tennessee had almost entirely fallen under Federal domination. By a simultaneous combined attack of army and fleet, the Federals endeavoured to make themselves masters of the entire course of the Mississippi. They had descended it to Island 10, where the troops came in contact with Beauregard's division, which had charge of the defence of the river. Already, on the 24th of February, General Pope's brigade, after landing at Commerce, on the right bank of the Mississippi, had repulsed J. Thomson's corps. Arrived at Island 10 and the village of New Madrid, they had, it is true, to halt before a formidable system of redoubts prepared by Beauregard. Since the fall of Donelson and Nashville, all the positions on the river above Memphis had been considered as lost to the Confederates, but those below could still be defended, and here it was a battle would soon be fought which might be decisive.

But meanwhile, Hampton Roads, at the entrance of the James River, had been the scene of a memorable combat. The battle had been between the first examples of armour-plated ships, the employment of which has modified the navies and naval tactics of both the Old and New World.

On the 1st of March the *Monitor*, an armour-plated vessel built by the Swedish engineer Ericcsen, and the *Virginia*, the old *Merrimac* much altered, had been ready to put to sea, one at New York, the other at Norfolk.

At this time a Federal division, under the orders of Captain Marston, was at anchor in Hampton Roads, near Newport News. This division was composed of the *Congress*, the *Saint Lawrence*, the *Cumberland*, and two steam frigates.

Suddenly, on the 2nd of March, in the morning, there appeared the *Virginia*, commanded by the Confederate Captain Buchanan. Followed by a few other vessels of minor importance, she attacked the *Congress*, and then the *Cumberland*, which latter she rammed and sank with a hundred and twenty men of her crew. Returning then to the *Congress*, stranded on the mud, she shelled her and set her on fire. Only the night stopped her from destroying the other three vessels of the Federal squadron.

It is difficult to imagine the effect produced by the victory of a small armour-plated ship over the broadside ships of the Union. The news was propagated with marvellous rapidity. Great was the consternation among the partizans of the North, for the *Virginia* might enter the Hudson and sink every ship at New York. Great was the joy of the Southerners, who saw the blockade raised and trade again untramelled along their coast.

It was this naval success which was being so noisily celebrated at Jacksonville. The Confederates now fancied themselves safe from the Federal vessels. Following on the victory at Hampton Roads, might not Commodore Dupont's squadron be immediately recalled to the Potomac or the Chesapeake? No landing would threaten Florida. The slavery ideas supported by the most violent of the Southerners would triumph without a contest. And this would strengthen Texar and his partizans in a position in which they could do so much evil.

But the Confederates were in too great a hurry. And the news already known in Florida, Gilbert was able to supplement with that which was current when he left Commandant Stevens's gunboat.

The second fight in Hampton Roads had been very different from the first. On the morning of the 9th of March, when the *Virginia* was preparing to attack the

Minnesota, one of the two Federal frigates, an enemy whose presence was unsuspected by the Southerners suddenly appeared before her. A strange machine came away from the frigate's side, "a cheese-box on a raft," as the Confederates called it. This "cheese-box" was the *Monitor*, commanded by Lieutenant Warden. He had been sent to destroy the batteries on the Potomac, but on reaching the mouth of the James River, had heard the firing in Hampton Roads, and during the night had brought the *Monitor* on to the scene.

At half a dozen yards from each other these two formidable engines of war fought for four hours, and then the *Virginia*, struck on the water-line and in danger of sinking, took flight in the direction of Norfolk. The *Monitor*, which was to sink nine months later, had completely defeated her rival. Thanks to her, the Federal Government resumed its superiority in Hampton Roads.

"No, father," said Gilbert, as he ended his story, "our squadron has not been recalled to the north. Stevens's six gunboats are anchored in the St. John's in front of the bar. I tell you that in three days, at least, we shall be masters of Jacksonville."

"Then you must see, Gilbert, that you had better wait and return on board! But on your way to Camdless Bay do you not think you have been followed?"

"No. Mars and I have escaped all observation."

"And this man who told you what had passed at the plantation, the fire, the robbery, the illness of your mother. Who is he?"

"He said he was one of the lighthouse-keepers at Pablo, and had come to warn Captain Stevens of the danger run by the Northerners in this part of Florida."

"Did he know of your presence on board?"

"No, and he seemed much surprised at it. But why these questions?"

"Because I am afraid it is some plot of Texar's. He more than suspected—he knew that you were in the Federal navy. He learnt that you were under the orders

of Commandant Stevens. If he wished to entice you here—"

"Never fear. We have got to Camdless Bay without being seen coming up the river, and it will be the same when we go back."

"If you go on board—not otherwise!"

"I promise you, father, Mars and I shall be on board before daybreak."

"When will you go?"

"When the tide turns. That is about half-past two o'clock."

"Who knows?" said Carrol. "Perhaps the gunboats will not stop three days at the bar?"

"The wind must freshen to give enough water on the bar," said the lieutenant. "May it blow a gale! And then we can get at the scoundrels! And then—"

"I will kill Texar," said Mars.

"It was a little after midnight. Gilbert and Mars would not leave Castle House for two hours, waiting for the ebb to return to the flotilla. The darkness was great, and there was every chance of their getting away unperceived although several boats were on guard on the St. John's below Camdless Bay.

The young officer went up to his mother. He found Alice seated at the bedside. Mrs. Burbank, exhausted by the efforts she had made, had fallen into a deep slumber—a very sorrowful one to judge by the way she sobbed.

Gilbert would not interfere with this state of torpor in which there was more prostration than sleep. He sat near the bed after Alice had motioned him not to speak. There in silence they watched together the poor woman whom misfortune had struck so cruelly. Had they words in which to exchange their thoughts? No! They felt the same suffering, they understood each other and said nothing—it was their hearts that spoke.

At last the time arrived for Gilbert to leave. He gave his hand to Alice, and both bent over Mrs. Burbank, whose eyes were half-closed and could not see them.

Then Gilbert pressed his lips to his mother's forehead,

which the girl kissed after him. Mrs. Burbank gave a sorrowful sob, but she did not see her son go, nor Alice follow him to bid him a last farewell.

Mars went out to see if the coast was clear. He came back as Gilbert and Alice entered the hall.

"It is time to go," said he.

"Yes, Gilbert," said James Burbank. "Go! we shall meet again at Jacksonville."

"Yes! At Jacksonville, and to-morrow if the tide allows us to cross the bar. As for Texar—"

"We must have him living! Do not forget that!"

"Yes, living!"

The young man embraced his father and shook hands with his uncle Carrol and Stannard.

"Come, Mars," said he.

And following the right bank of the river they kept along for half an hour. They met no one. They reached the place where they had left the gig, and embarked in her to get into the stream, which would take them rapidly to the bar of the St. John's.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE ST. JOHN'S.

THEY were alone on the river. Not a light could be seen on the opposite bank. The lights of Jacksonville were hidden by the bend of Camdless Creek, as it rounded towards the north; but the reflection mounted on high and tinged the lower bank of clouds.

Although the night was dark, the gig could without difficulty make its way down stream to the bar. No vapour, however, rose from the waters of the St. John's, and it could easily be followed and pursued if any Confederate boat was in waiting for it, but this Gilbert and his companion had no reason to expect.

Both were silent. Instead of heading down stream they would much rather have crossed it to seek out Texar in Jacksonville, and meet him face to face. Then ascending the river they could search the forest and the creeks and their banks, and though James Burbank had failed they might succeed. But it was best to wait. When the Federals were masters of Florida, Gilbert and Mars could set to work against the Spaniard with more chances of success. Their duty now was to re-join the flotilla under Commandant Stevens. If the bar became practicable sooner than they hoped, the young lieutenant ought to be at his post ready for action, and Mars should be at his post ready to pilot the gunboats up the channel, the depth of which, at every moment of the rising tide, was so well known to him.

Mars, seated in the stern of the gig, plied his paddle with vigour. In the bow Gilbert kept careful watch down stream, ready to signal any danger that presented itself

from boat or drifting tree. Leaving the right bank obliquely, they made for the middle of the channel, so as to take advantage of the full strength of the stream. Once they were there, Mars, by a stroke to port or starboard, could easily keep the gig on its course.

It would have been safer to have kept along by the dark fringe of trees and gigantic reeds which bordered the right bank of the St. John's. In the shadow of the thick branches there was little risk of discovery. But a little below the plantation a sharp elbow of the bank threw the current out to the other side, and formed a wide eddy which made the navigation somewhat difficult. Mars, seeing nothing suspicious ahead, steered the boat out into the current, which was swiftly running to the sea. From the landing-place at Camdless Bay to the anchorage of the flotilla below the bar, the distance was four or five miles, and helped by the ebb and the vigorous strokes of the paddle, this ought to be accomplished within a couple of hours.

A quarter of an hour after their start, Gilbert and Mars were in mid-stream, and approaching Jacksonville. It may be that Mars unconsciously headed towards the town, drawn thither by some irresistible attraction. Nevertheless the hateful place must be avoided, for its neighbourhood was probably better guarded than the middle of the river.

"Starboard, Mars, starboard," said the young officer.

And the gig curved into the line of the current about a quarter of a mile from the left bank.

Jacksonville was now neither dark nor silent. Scores of lights were moving about on the wharves, or swaying in the boats on the water. A few were gliding along from point to point, as if an active guard had been organized.

At the same time songs and shouts showed that scenes of amusement or riot continued to trouble the town. Did, then, Texar and his partizans believe in the defeat of the Northerners in Virginia and the possible retreat of the flotilla? Or were they making the best of the few days that were left to them in launching out into every excess,

while the people around them were drunk with whiskey and gin?

The gig kept on her course in mid-stream. Gilbert had good reason to hope that he would be out of danger as soon as he had passed Jacksonville.

Suddenly he motioned to Mars to stop paddling. Within a mile below the town he had just caught sight of a long line of black objects stretching like a range of reefs from one side of the river to the other.

It was a line of boats broadside on, and guarding the St. John's. Evidently, when the gunboats cleared the bar, these would be powerless to resist them, and would have to retreat, but if any Federal boats attempted to ascend the river they might offer some opposition to their passage. For this reason they had been placed in position during the night. They lay without moving, kept in station either by their grapnels or their oars. Although no men could be seen it was certain that a number were on board and well armed.

Gilbert, of course, remarked that the string of vessels had not barred the river when he came up to Camdless Bay. The precaution had been taken since the passage of the gig, and perhaps, in view of an expected attack from Commandant Stevens. Anyhow, the gig was forced to leave the centre of the stream, and keep as close as possible to the right shore, where it might pass unperceived among the reeds in the shadow of the trees. This was the only chance of passing the barrier.

"Mars, mind you paddle without any noise until we are through the line," said the lieutenant.

"Yes, sir."

"We may get among the eddies, and if you want any help—"

"I shall not want any."

And with a powerful stroke he sent the boat towards the river side some three hundred yards above the guarded line. If she had not been sighted as she crossed the river —and she might have been—she would certainly be safe from discovery under the dark masses along its edge, and

if the end of the line of boats did not extend to the bank, it was pretty certain she could get through.

Mars worked her carefully down in the darkness, which the thick curtain of leafage rendered darker. The stumps that here and there showed above the water he dexterously avoided, and with noiseless strokes headvanced, occasionally crossing an eddy or a counter current which, without some trouble, it was not easy to get through. Coasting in this way quite an hour would be lost, though it would matter little if daylight came before the voyage ended, as by that time they would be near enough to the gunboats to fear no danger from Jacksonville.

About four o'clock the gig reached the line of boats. As Gilbert had expected, the shallowness of the river close in shore had caused the passage near the edge to be left unguarded. A few hundred feet beyond, a point jutted out into the St. John's, thickly wooded and crowded with mangroves and bamboos. This point on the up-stream side was as dark and gloomy as could be wished, but on the downstream face the trees and shrubs suddenly came to an end, and the shore was cut up into marshes and creeks, and lay low and exposed, with nothing to cast a shadow. The river there was as light as in the open, and a black moving point like the gig would probably be seen should any vessel be lying off in the neighbourhood.

Beyond it the eddies ended, and the current flowed straight and strong. If the boat could double the point, she would soon be swept down to the bar, and thence to the anchorage.

Cautiously Mars glided by under the bank. Peering into the darkness he intently watched the lower course of the river. Close to the edge as it was safe to go, clearing the eddies which, as the point curved out, grew more troublesome to him, he plied his paddle silently, while Gilbert, forward, kept a steady look-out over the whole surface of the St. John's.

Gradually the gig neared the point. A few minutes more and they would reach the end which ran out as a fine

tongue of sand. They were not more than thirty yards from it when Mars abruptly stopped.

"Are you tired?" asked the lieutenant. "Shall I take your place?"

"Not a word, Mr. Gilbert!" whispered Mars.

And with two strong strokes of the paddle, he drove the gig towards the land as if to run her on the bank. Then, instantly, he grasped one of the branches hanging over the river, and under it guided the boat out of sight. In an instant they were alongside the root of one of the mangrove trees, and motionless in darkness so deep that they could not see each other.

In ten seconds the manœuvre was accomplished.

The lieutenant seized his companion's arm, and was about to demand an explanation, when Mars pointed through the foliage and showed him a moving object just off the spit.

It was a boat with four men in her rowing up-stream, and rounding the point so as to skirt the bank as she passed.

The same thought occurred to Gilbert and Mars. Before everything, and in spite of everything, they must regain their ship. If the gig was discovered they would not hesitate to climb the bank, run under the trees, and escape along the riverside to the bar. There at daybreak, whether their signals were answered by the nearest of the gunboats or they had to swim for it, they would do all that was humanly possible to get back to their duty.

But a moment afterwards they found that all retreat by land was cut off.

When the boat arrived at some twenty feet from the spot where they lay hid, a conversation suddenly began between the men in her and half a dozen others who appeared in the gloom among the trees on the top of the bank.

"The worst is over!" said one from the land.

"Yes," said a man in the boat. "To double that point against the tide is almost as bad as pulling up a rapid."

"Are you going to anchor here now that we have been landed on the point?"

"Yes. We shall guard the end of the barrier better."

"Right. We will look after the bank, and unless they take to the marshes, the scoundrels will not find it easy to get by us."

"Have they done so, do you think?"

"No; they couldn't. They'll try to get back on board before daylight, and as they cannot pass the boat barrier, they will make their attempt along here. And here we are to stop them."

Few as were the phrases, they were sufficient to explain what had happened. The departure of Gilbert and Mars had been observed—there could be no doubt of that. Although they had managed to reach Camdless Bay without falling aboard of the boats ordered to stop them, now that the river was barred, and their return waited for, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to reach the gunboats.

The gig was fairly caught between the men in the boat and the men landed on the point. Flight by the river was impracticable, and none the less so was it impracticable along this narrow bank, with the St. John's on one side and the marshes on the other.

At the same time Gilbert learnt that his presence on the St. John's was known; and there could be no doubt it was known that he and his companion had landed at Camdless Bay, that one of them was James Burbank's son, an officer in the Federal navy, and the other one of his men. The lieutenant could not well mistake the danger that threatened him when he heard the last words of the conversation.

"Keep your eyes open, then," said one of the men on the land.

"All right," was the reply. "A Yankee officer is a good prize, particularly when the officer is the son of one of our cursed Floridan Federals."

"And they'll pay well for him, for Texar is the paymaster."

"We may not catch them to-night, for they may lay up in some of the creeks. But when day comes we'll search every cranny so well that not a water rat will escape us."

"Don't forget, you are to take them alive."

"All right! Remember, if we get them on the land, we have to hail you to take them over to Jacksonville."

"Unless we have to give chase we shall remain here."

"And we shall stop here across the bank."

"Good luck to you! You had better have spent the night in drinks at Jacksonville."

"Yes, if the rascals outwit us! But never fear, tomorrow we shall take them to Texar bound hand and foot."

The boat then moved off some twenty feet, and then the noise of a chain running out announced that she had dropped anchor. The men above spoke no more, but the sound of their feet was heard as they marched to and fro on the fallen leaves.

By the river as by the land flight was no longer possible.

So thought Gilbert and Mars. Neither of them had made a single movement or uttered a word. There was nothing to betray the presence of the gig under the dark arbour of foliage—an arbour which was a prison. To leave it was impossible. Supposing that they were not discovered during the night, how could they escape when day appeared?

The lieutenant's capture not only meant danger to his own life, but another attack on his father by Texar, and proof of James Burbank's correspondence with the Federals. When Gilbert was in Texar's power, the necessary proof would be to hand. And then what would become of Mrs. Burbank? What would become of Dy and Zermah, when neither father, brother, nor husband could continue the search?

In a moment all these thoughts presented themselves, and Gilbert recognized the inevitable consequences.

If they were taken only one chance was left. The Federals might seize Jacksonville before Texar could injure them. The prisoners might be given enough time

for this to take place between the sentence they could not escape and their execution. That was their only hope. But how could they hurry on the arrival of Stevens? How could he clear the bar if the water was still wanting? How could Stevens find his way through the windings of the channel if his pilot, Mars, was in the hands of the Confederates?

Evidently, then, Gilbert must risk even the impossible to get on board before daylight; and he must leave this place at once. But could he do so? Could not Mars, by driving the gig suddenly across the eddy, get clear away? While the men in the boat were losing time by weighing the grapnel or letting out chain, could they not get by out of reach?

That was impossible! The lieutenant knew it only too well. The paddle was no match for four oars. The gig would inevitably be caught. To make such an attempt was to court certain capture.

What was then to be done? Was he to wait? Day would soon appear. It was already half-past four o'clock, and a few streaks of the dawn had risen above the eastern horizon.

It was necessary to do something. Gilbert, bending towards Mars, spoke to him in a whisper.

"We cannot wait much longer. We are both armed with a revolver and a cutlass. In the boat there are only four men. That is only two to one; and we shall have the advantage of the surprise. You can send the gig up to the boat in a stroke or two; she is anchored and cannot stop our boarding. We will fall on the men and settle them before they have time to recognize us, and we can make a dash for it. Before the fellows on the bank have given the alarm we may have got through the barrier and reached the ships. Do you understand?"

Mars replied by drawing his cutlass and slipping it into his belt near his revolver. Then he slacked off the painter of the gig from the mangrove root and grasped his paddle ready for a vigorous stroke.

But as he stooped to begin Gilbert stopped him with a gesture.

Something had come unexpectedly to alter his plans.

With the first streaks of the day, a thick mist began to rise on the water. Like a humid pile of cotton-wool it rolled along the river waves, clinging to them as it came. Formed over the sea, such vapours enter the estuary, and driven before a gentle breeze, ascend the course of the St. John's. In less than a quarter of an hour Jacksonville, on the left bank, and the trees on the right bank had disappeared, wrapped in the yellowish mist whose characteristic odour filled the valley.

Did not this offer a means of safety? Instead of engaging in an unequal struggle in which they might both fall, why should they not try to get by in the fog?

Gilbert saw this, and that is why he stopped Mars from beginning his stroke. Now, instead of dashing out, he was to slip along cautiously and silently, and avoid the boat, which slowly vanished as the mist closed round it.

Then the voices were again heard replying to the bank from the river.

"Look out in the fog."

"Yes. We are getting in the anchor, and coming closer in shore."

"All right. But don't break your communication with the line. If they come near you, keep them back till the fog lifts."

"Yes! Never fear; you see that the beggars don't get past you ashore."

Evidently the orders were obeyed. There were certain boats crossing the river from one bank to the other, that also was obvious. But Gilbert did not hesitate. The gig, paddled noiselessly by Mars, glided out from her shelter under the trees, and crossed the eddy in which the boat had been anchored.

The fog seemed to thicken, although it was penetrated by a dim light such as is given by a horn lantern. Nothing

could be seen a yard or two away. If the gig passed clear of the boat, there was an excellent chance of her escaping unobserved. And it was not difficult to avoid the boat, for the men in weighing the anchor made enough noise with the chain to leave no doubt as to their exact position.

The gig slipped by unnoticed, and Mars could ply his paddle a little more vigorously.

The difficulty was to keep a proper course without running out into midstream. If possible he would have remained at a little distance from the right bank; but the only guide was the lapping of the water on the shore. The day was breaking, and the light flooded the mass of vapour although the fog was very thick.

For half an hour the gig, so to speak, wandered about at a venture. Sometimes a vague outline unexpectedly appeared, which might be a boat much magnified by refraction—an instance of a phenomenon commonly observed in sea fogs.

In fact every object appeared with quite fantastic suddenness, and seemed to be of enormous dimensions. Luckily what Gilbert took for a boat would be only a buoy, or rock above water, or a pole with its upper end vanishing in the mist.

A few pairs of birds flew by with measured flap of wing. They could scarcely see them, but they heard their piercing cry. Some came flying along the surface of the water, and turned to flight when the gig approached them. They vanished, but it was impossible to say if they flew to the bank or dived into the water.

From their paddling all the time with the stream Gilbert knew that he must be nearing the anchorage of the gunboats; but as the ebb had slackened he could not say if he had passed the line, and he was in constant expectation of running aboard one of the boats.

All chance of serious danger was not over. And it soon became evident that the danger was greater than ever. At short intervals Mars had to stop and hold the paddle out

of the water. The noise of oars, sometimes far off, sometimes close by, would make itself heard. Shouts would be exchanged between the boats. Vague masses would loom and vanish in the fog, and these were evidently the guard boats it was their object to avoid. Sometimes the mist would suddenly open as if a puff of wind had penetrated it. The range of vision would increase to a hundred yards and more, and Gilbert and Mars would try to make out their whereabouts; and then the mist would thicken again, and all they could do was to drop down with the stream.

It was a little past five o'clock. Gilbert calculated that he was two miles from the anchorage. As a fact, he had not yet reached the bar of the river, which would be easily recognizable by the increase in the sound of the stream, and by the numerous minor currents intermingling tumultuously in a way no sailor could mistake. Had he crossed the bar, Gilbert would have thought himself safe. It was not likely that the boats would venture so far from Jacksonville under the fire of the gunboats.

Gilbert and Mars bent over almost to the level of the water and listened. They could hear nothing. Perhaps they had gone astray to the right or left of the river? Had they not better take an oblique course so as to reach one of the banks, and wait till the fog grew lighter to get their proper bearings?

This seemed the best thing to do now that the mist had begun to rise. The sun, which they knew was now up, was lifting the fog as it warmed it. The surface of the St. John's would soon come into view for some distance round before the sky would show itself. Then the curtain would suddenly collapse, and the horizon appear out of the mist. A mile perhaps below the bar Gilbert would see the gunboats swinging to the ebb, and he would be able to reach them.

At this moment a sound of waters rushing together was heard. Almost immediately the gig began to turn as if caught in a whirlpool. There could be no mistake.

"The bar!" exclaimed Gilbert.

"Yes; the bar!" said Mars; "and once we are over it we shall be at the anchorage."

Mars seized the paddle, and endeavoured to keep the proper course.

Suddenly Gilbert stopped him. The mist had opened for a moment, and he caught sight of a boat close behind them. Had her men seen them? Were they trying to stop the way?

"Port!" said the young lieutenant.

In went the paddle, and in a few strokes the gig was out of the line.

But again voices were heard. They were hailing noisily. It was evident that in this part of the river many boats were on guard.

Suddenly, as if a powerful gust had cleared the space, the mist fell shattered on the surface of the St. John's.

Gilbert could not restrain a shout of alarm.

The gig was in the centre of a dozen boats. They were on the watch at this part of the winding channel which the bar cut across in a long slanting line.

"There they are! There they are!" came from the boats around them.

"Yes! here we are," said the lieutenant. "Take your cutlass and revolver, Mars, and we will defend ourselves."

Defend themselves! Two against thirty!

In a moment three or four of the boats were alongside. Mars and Gilbert fired their revolvers; the others did not fire, for the prisoners were to be taken alive. Three or four of the sailors were killed or wounded. But in this unequal strife, how could Gilbert and his companion fail to be overpowered?

The lieutenant was throttled in spite of his energetic resistance, and dragged on to one of the boats.

"Escape, Mars! escape!" he shouted for the last time.

With a sweep of his cutlass Mars released himself from

the man who held him, and before they could seize him again he had thrown himself into the river. In vain they sought to recapture him. He had vanished among the whirlpools of the bar, where the tumultuous waters were being lashed into torrents by the return of the rising tide.

CHAPTER XV.

SENTENCE.

An hour later Gilbert was landed at Jacksonville. The reports of the revolvers had been heard up-stream. Did they mean an engagement between the Confederate boats and the Federal flotilla? Was it not to be feared that the gunboats had cleared the channel? No wonder that there was serious excitement among the townspeople! Some of them rushed to the stockades. The civil authorities, represented by Texar and the most determined of his partizans, had followed them. All were looking in the direction of the bar, now free from mist. Field-glasses and telescopes were in constant use. But the distance was too great—about three miles—for them to ascertain the importance of the engagement or its results.

The flotilla evidently remained at the anchorage it occupied the night before, and Jacksonville need not fear an immediate attack from the gunboats. The people who had most deeply committed themselves would have time to escape into the interior of Florida.

If Texar and two or three of his companions had more reason than others to fear for their safety, there appeared to be no cause for anxiety in what had occurred. The Spaniard suspected that it meant the capture of the gig that he wanted at any cost.

"Yes, at any cost," said he, endeavouring to recognize the boat as it neared the quay. "At any cost this son of

Burbank's must fall into the snare I spread for him. Then I shall hold the proof that James Burbank is in communication with the Federals! And when I have shot the son, twenty-four hours shall not slip by before I have shot the father!"

Although his party were masters of Jacksonville, Texar, after the discharge of James Burbank, had been waiting for a propitious occasion of again arresting him. The opportunity came in the trap laid for Gilbert Burbank. With Gilbert identified as a Federal officer, arrested in the enemy's country, condemned as a spy, the Spaniard could enjoy his revenge to the full.

Circumstances served him well. It was indeed the son of the Camdless Bay planter whom they were bringing to Jacksonville. That Gilbert was alone, that his companion had been drowned or saved made little difference so long as the young officer was captured. Texar had only to bring him before a committee composed of his partizans, where he would preside in person.

Gilbert was received with howls and threats by the people, who knew him well. He treated the shouts with disdain. He gave no sign of fear, although a detachment of soldiers had to be called up to protect his life against the violence of the crowd. But when he saw Texar he could not restrain himself, and would have thrown himself on him had he not been stopped by the soldiers.

Texar did not move. He did not say a word. He pretended not to see him, and allowed him to be taken away with the most perfect indifference.

A few minutes afterwards Gilbert Burbank found himself in the Jacksonville prison. There could be no doubt as to the fate for which the Southerners were keeping him.

In about an hour Mr. Harvey, James Burbank's correspondent, presented himself at the prison and attempted to see Gilbert. He was denied admission. By Texar's orders the lieutenant was kept in solitary confinement.

And the only result of Mr. Harvey's application was that he himself was put under strict surveillance.

His connection with the Burbanks was known, and it was not in accordance with Texar's plans that Gilbert's arrest should immediately be known at Camdless Bay.

When the verdict was given and the sentence pronounced it would be time enough to inform James Burbank of what had passed, and when he was informed of it there would be no time for him to leave Castle House and escape from Texar.

And so Mr. Harvey was unable to send a messenger to Camdless Bay. An embargo had been put on all the boats in the port. All communication was shut off between the left and right banks of the river. While his father thought he was safe on board the gunboat the lieutenant was in prison at Jacksonville.

At Castle House they listened with anxiety for some distant sound of firing to announce the arrival of the Federals above the bar. Jacksonville in the hands of the Northerners meant Texar in the hands of James Burbank.

Not a sound was heard from downstream. Overseer Perry, who went out to explore the St. John's up to the line of boats, Pyg and one of the assistant-overseers sent three miles down the riverside beyond the plantation, came back with the same report. The flotilla was still at the anchorage, and there was no sign of preparation to start for Jacksonville.

And besides, how could they cross the bar? Admitting that the tide rendered it practicable sooner than they hoped, how could they venture along the intricate channel now that the only pilot who knew the soundings was no longer with them? For Mars had not reappeared. And if James Burbank had known what had passed after the capture of the gig, would he not have believed that his son's companion had perished in the whirlpools? And if Mars had been saved, would not his first care have been to

return to Camdless Bay as it was impossible for him to return on board?

Mars had not appeared at the plantation.

Next day, the 11th of March, about eleven o'clock, the committee assembled, with Texar as president, in the very Court of Justice where the Spaniard had made his charge against James Burbank. This time, the charges against the young officer were too serious to allow of his escape. He was doomed beforehand. Once this business of the son was settled, Texar could devote himself to the father. With little Dy in his power, Mrs. Burbank would succumb to the successive blows he had dealt her, and he would be avenged. Did it not seem as though everything played into his hands to help him gratify his implacable hatred?

Gilbert was brought from his prison. The crowd accompanied him, groaning and yelling as on the previous evening. When he entered the court, where Texar's partizans were already in force, he was saluted with violent uproar.

"Death to the spy! Death!"

Gilbert took it all very coolly, and even in the Spaniard's presence kept himself well under control.

"Your name is Gilbert Burbank," said Texar. "And you are an officer in the Federal Navy?"

"Yes."

"And you are now a lieutenant on board one of the gunboats under Commandant Stevens?"

"Yes."

"You are the son of James Burbank, a Northerner, the owner of the plantation at Camdless Bay?"

"Yes."

"You admit that you left the flotilla anchored below the bar, during the night of the 10th of March?"

"Yes."

"You admit that you were captured as you were trying to regain the flotilla with one of your men?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me what your business was on the St. John's?"

"A man came on board the gunboat of which I was second in command, and told me that my father's plantation had been devastated by a horde of scoundrels, that Castle House had been besieged by thieves. I need not tell that to the President of this Committee, who is personally responsible for these crimes."

"I tell Gilbert Burbank," said Texar, "that his father had challenged public opinion by freeing his slaves, that an order had been issued commanding the newly freed slaves to disperse, that this order was executed—"

"With pillage and incendiarism," replied Gilbert, "and rape, of which Texar is personally the author."

"When I am before my judges I will reply," said the Spaniard coldly. "Gilbert Burbank, do not attempt to change our positions. You are the accused, not the accuser."

"Yes, the accused—at this moment, at all events, but the Federal gunboats have only the bar of the St. John's between them and Jacksonville, and then—"

Then the uproar broke out against the young officer, who dared to brave the Southerners to their face.

"Death! Death!" shouted the crowd on all sides.

The Spaniard with difficulty quieted the angry crowd. Then he resumed his questions.

"Will you tell us, Gilbert Burbank, why you left your ship last night?"

"To see my dying mother."

"You admit, then, that you landed at Camdless Bay?"

"I have no reason to hide it."

"And only to see your mother?"

"Only."

"We have reason to believe you had another object?"

"What?"

"To communicate with your father, James Burbank, who

has been under suspicion for some time of being in correspondence with the Federal army."

"You know that is not true," replied Gilbert with very natural indignation. "If I came to Camdless Bay, it was not as an officer, but as a son."

"Or a spy?" said Texar.

The shouts began again.

"Death to the spy! Death!"

Gilbert saw that he was lost, and what was a terrible blow to him, that his father was lost with him.

"Yes," said Texar, "the illness of your mother was only a pretext! You came as a spy to Camdless Bay to report to the Federals the state of the defences of the St. John's."

Gilbert rose.

"I came to see my dying mother, as you know well. Never should. I have believed that in a civilized country there could be judges who would consider it a crime for a sailor to come to his mother's deathbed, even in the enemy's territory! Let him who blames me and would not do likewise, dare to tell me so!"

Men in whom hatred had not extinguished all feeling, would have applauded a declaration so noble and frank. But this was not the case here.

The declaration was received with renewed uproar; and when the Spaniard remarked that in receiving an officer of the enemy in time of war, James Burbank was as guilty as the officer, his statement was loudly applauded.

Then the committee, making a note of the admissions as to the father, condemned Lieutenant Gilbert Burbank, of the Federal navy, to death.

The doomed man was then taken back to prison amid the shouts of the populace, who followed him with cries of—

"Death to the spy! Death!"

That evening a detachment of the Jacksonville militia arrived at Camdless Bay. The officer in command asked for Mr. Burbank.

James Burbank came forward to meet him, accompanied by Edward Carrol and Walter Stannard.

"What is it they want?" asked James Burbank.

"Read that order!" answered the officer.

The order was to arrest James Burbank, as the accomplice of Gilbert Burbank, condemned to death as a spy by the Committee of Jacksonville, and who was to be shot within twenty-four hours.

Love My Beloved ---

Dated = 21 January 1857

END OF PART I.

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